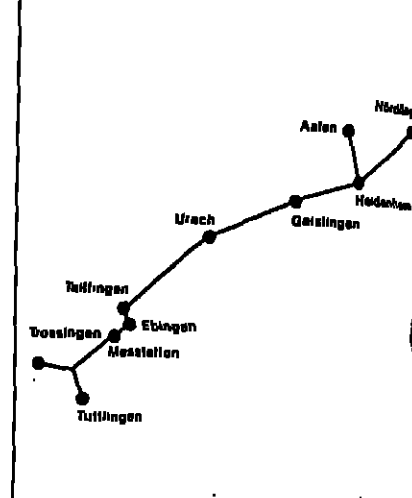
Routes to tour in Germany

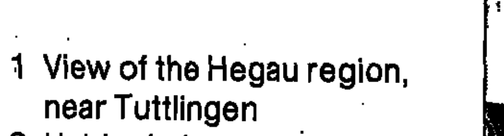


The Swabian Alb Route

German roads will get you there. South of Stuttgart the Swabian Alb runs north-east from the Black Forest. It is a range of hills full of fossilised reminders of prehistory. It has a blustery but healthy climate, so have good walking shoes with you and scale a few heights as you try out some of the 6,250 miles of marked paths. Dense forests, caves full of stalactites and stalagmites, ruined castles and rocks that invite you to clamber will ensure variety.

You will also see what you can't see from a car: rare flowers and plants. The route runs over 125 miles through health resorts and nature reserves, passing Baroque churches, late Gothic and Rococo architecture and Hohenzollern Castle, home of the German Imperial family.

Visit Germany and let the Swabian Alb Route be your guide.

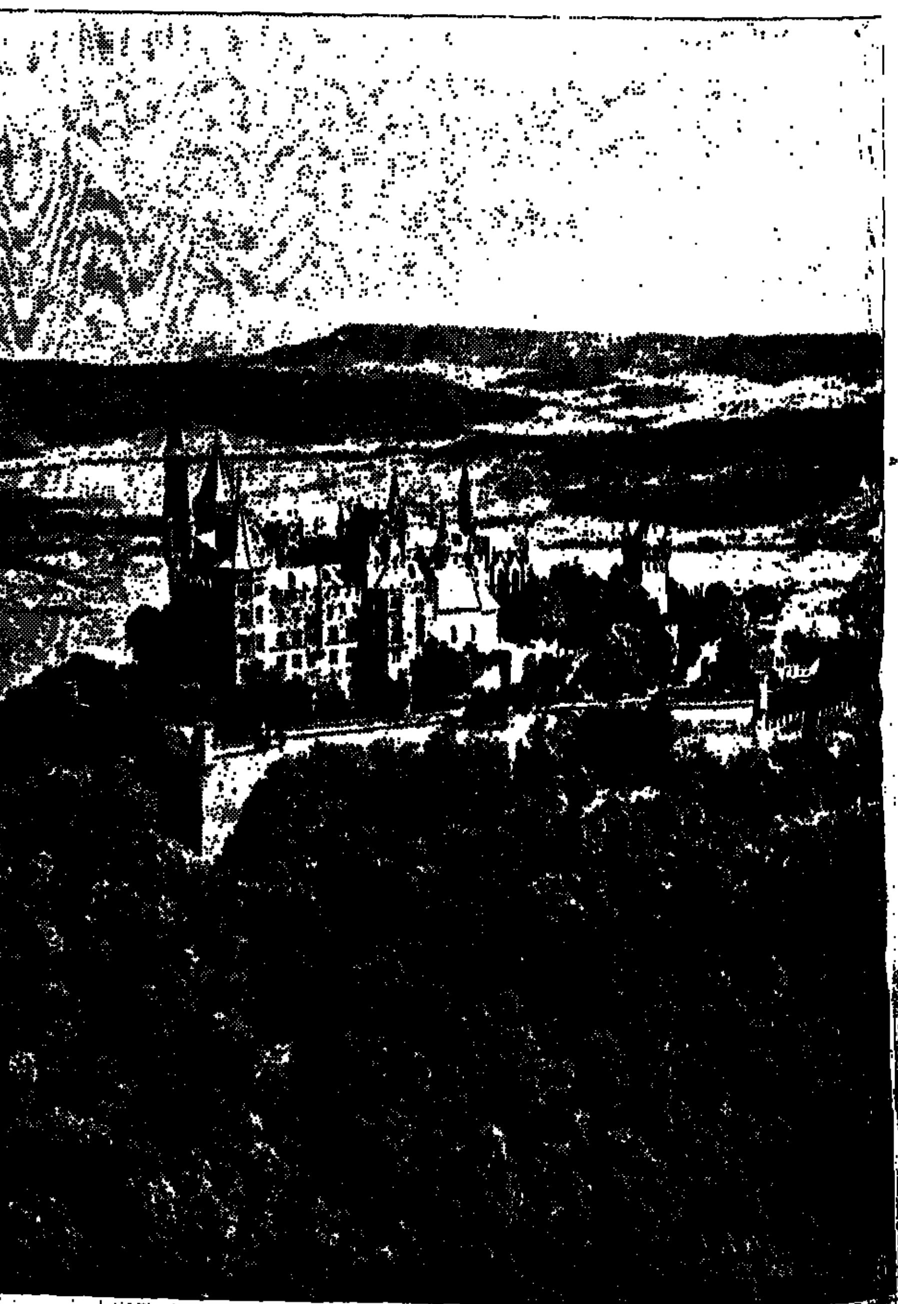


1 View of the Hegau region, near Tuttlingen
2 Heidenheim
3 Nördlingen
4 Urach
5 Hohenzollern Castle



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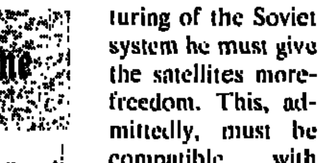
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New frontiers to go for at renewed Vienna talks





The negotiations in Vienna on conventional arms reduction in Europe are more important than all previous efforts by the two world powers to contain nuclear armament.

The ultimate aim is to ensure a mutually agreed balance of military power, discernibly intended for defence purposes only, by removing the Warsaw Pact's extensive invasion capability risk.

The negotiators of the 23 Nato and Warsaw Pact member states will have to resolve some pretty awkward military questions.

First of all, they must agree on the conference's terms of reference and schedule to prevent the talks from foundering in the face of the first major obstacle, the dispute over data, and thus suffering the same fate as the fruitless MBFR talks which lasted for almost 16 years.

Distribution of this issue of THE GERMAN TRIBUNE is likely to be delayed in some areas. Industrial action by some members of the printing workers' union has caused a shortage of newsprint. We apologise to readers who do not receive their copies on time.

The negotiators in Vienna will find it difficult enough to elaborate mutually acceptable criteria and make sure that they stay within the framework of theirrespective mandates. This time the political aspect must retain priority over individual details of arms control.

The conventional stability talks in Vienna should not cover up the crucial question: how can the fundamental political antagonism symbolised by the division of Germany be overcome in favour of a European balance of interests in the German Question? The link between these negotiations and the CSCE process is of key significance.

This can be established in the mandate by means of agreement on regular reporting to the twelve neutral and non-aligned states participating in the CSCE process as well as with the help of the parallel continuation in Vienna of talks by the 35 CSCE member states on confidence-building measures and disarmament in Europe.

The overall framework of the Vienna talks on conventional arms control is therefore circumscribed by the objectives of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe.

This does not alter the autonomy of *these arms control talks insisted upon by* the United States.

The peripheral European states in northern Europe and in the Mediterranean region occasionally had their suspicions that the aim of talks was simply to draw up a political dividing line in Europe.

The reduction of the military threat and political progress are inseparable.

The West and the neutral states can quite rightly point towards the success achieved by the Vienna CSCE final document.

The Soviet Union has come to realise that the CSCE, in all its dimensions, is a dynamic process and thus no substitute for a peace treaty consolidating the status quo of 1945.

If Mikhail Gorbachov intends gaining more room to manoeuvre for the restructuring of the Soviet system he must give the satellites morefreedom. This, admittedly, must be compatible with Moscow's new security interests, which have yet to be defined. This could lead to a gradual elimination of antagonisms between East and West. Nato found it extremely difficult to work out its line of negotiation for the arms control talks in Vienna. The West

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Menuhin award

Sir Yehudi Menuhin, the violinist (left) with Bonn President Richard von Weizsäcker after receiving in Bonn the Buber-Rosenzweig medal for services to mankind. (Photo: AP)

Are alluring new shores really beckoning the Germans?

No matter what the Germans do they are sure to set tongues wagging in neighbouring countries. This, it seems, is part of their fate.

The Germans as wanderers between the worlds, the Germans on Gorbachov's lime-twig — clichés instead of facts.

Instead of complaining about stereotypes, it would be better to take a closer look at how such misunderstandings have evolved.

Every new discussion about Europe is automatically accompanied by a discussion about the stance of the Germans between East and West. If, for example, the situation changes in Eastern Europe — one need only point towards the pluralistic tendencies in Hungary and Poland — the question of the associated effects for Bonn's Ostpolitik immediately surfaces.

After all, the Bonn governments have devoted more attention to this field over the past decades than other western governments — in their own interests.

The *New York Times* surprisedly observed that the (West) Germans are the only nation in the West with what could be labelled as a concept for coming to terms with the new situation in which the independence of the Eastern European states is becoming ever more visible.

In some western visions of the future there is already reference to an annulment of the Yalta resolutions of 1945. The division of Europe agreed on then might one day end and the Germans, with the close contacts fostered over the years, might take on a leading role.

Are the Germans on the verge of loosening their mooring and setting course for unknown and alluring shores in a "new megalomania" (Arnulf Baring)?

Opinion polls are cited as proof of such suspicions. For example, the fact that 80% of West Germans welcome Gorbachov's disarmament proposals and regard a withdrawal of all nuclear weapons from Europe as possible.

Bonn is finding it increasingly difficult to allay the concern in the West.

References to Bonn's undiminished contributions to defence and professions of loyalty to the western community of values, help improve the situation.

Continued on page 2.



Call for chemical-weapons ban

Bonn Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher (left) and Italian Foreign Minister Giulio Andreotti pictured at the United Nations conference on chemical weapons in Geneva. (Photo: dpa)

■ INTERNATIONAL

Europe the honest broker in Central America?



The détente in East-West relations has created an atmosphere in which it has become possible to mitigate conflicts which were hitherto regarded as insoluble. This applies to the Gulf war as well as to the Afghanistan conflict.

In southern Africa, Asia and the Middle East there are also signs of a conciliatory spirit which is long overdue.

In one region, however, the spreading mood of pacification has hardly borne fruit: in Central America.

After the presidents of Guatemala, Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua and Costa Rica reached agreement on a peace plan for Central America ("Esquipulas II") in August 1987 it looked as if the politicians of this region would be able to solve their problems themselves.

The objectives formulated by Costa Rica's president Arias and hailed by all five presidents were national reconciliation, putting a stop to civil wars, and democratisation.

The dream of pulling oneself out of the quagmire by the scruff of one's own neck, however, can only come true in the land of fairytales.

The regional arrangement lacked a the firm basis of a willingness on the part of the two superpowers to foster the "peace process" in Central America with initiatives of their own.

All the efforts to establish peace in this region, therefore, ended up in deadlock.

There was a risk that the "Arias plan" would founder just like the proposals and plans which previously bore the name "Contadora."

During the renewed Central American "summit" the five countries managed to make a certain amount of headway.

This is undoubtedly connected with the continuingly good general political climate worldwide.

In the near future Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachov will be visiting Cuba.

Washington hopes that during his visit he will be able to exert his moderating influence on Fidel Castro, the patron of all revolutionaries in Latin America.

President Bush has hinted that Central America could become a further example for the "new spirit of cooperation" between the Soviet Union and the United States.

The situation in this region, however, is also influenced by changes there since 1987.

The most important factor is the probably definitive collapse of the anti-Sandinist rebels as a serious military opponent of the Nicaraguan regime.

The "Contras" have failed because of their own disunity and because of the politics of the United States.

The "hawks" and "doves" in the Reagan Administration and in Congress held each other in check.

Whereas the "hawks" hoped for a military defeat of the Sandinistas, the "doves" were at most willing to accept "Contra" aid as a means of forcing the Sandinistas into negotiations with their political rivals and bringing about a democratisation of the regime. The first goal was never a realistic one without intervention by American troops; despite slight progress the second goal also fell through because of in-fighting in Washington.

The fact that President Ortega was at all willing to make concessions at the last Central American "summit" was due to Nicaragua's economic situation, which can only be described as catastrophic.

It has become clear that the Soviet Union is no longer willing to provide the tremendous assistance (in the form of arms and raw materials supplies) it once did for its clients in the Third World.

The Sandinistas are now obliged to tap new sources in an effort to avoid economic collapse.

Ortega recently promised the "private sector", the businessmen who decided to stay in Nicaragua, more cooperation, in particular a reduction of government intervention in economic affairs.

He is unlikely to achieve a great deal, however, with the help of vague assurances.

The Sandinistas need help from abroad — and look first and foremost to the European Community.

It was certainly no coincidence that the revival of the Arias plan took place shortly before the Central Americans convened with Community delegates for the fifth annual conference with the European Community ("San José V").

Nicaragua is not alone in its search for financial support. The other countries in this region have turned hopefully to the European Community. Their interest not only centres on the financial aspect, but also on the "model" character of the European Community in Third World countries.

The Arias plan was linked with the project of a "Central American parliament" along the lines of the European Parliament.

It was hoped that such a parliament might then become the political superstructure for a Central American Common Market.

Together with a number of other agreements at "Esquipulas II" this has remained a project.

In future the Europeans should tie their political and financial assistance for this region to the fulfilment of these plans.

This would give them an effective lever for ensuring the continuation of the peace process.

A first step in this direction would be to allow observers from European Community member states to verify the disbandment of the "Contra" camps in Honduras, the resettlement of the rebels and the holding of free elections in all five countries.

For historical reasons the United States is not a credible "honest broker" in the eyes of the Central Americans.

This is a role the Europeans could take on.

This, however, also presupposes honesty in the relationship to Washington.

Western Europe cannot — economically, politically or strategically — assume the role of a rival or even "substitute" for the United States on the isthmus between North and South America.

European initiatives can only be successful if they take into account US-American interests and are therefore — at least tacitly — backed by Washington.

Günther Nonnenmacher

(Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung für Deutschland, 6 March 1989)

Continued from page 1

is unable to impress its own public opinion in the same manner as Gorbachov.

This is often forgotten in the enthusiasm which greets Soviet arms reduction offers.

The difference between a highly armed nuclear land power with short channels of communication, such as the Soviet Union, and the naval power decisively responsible for the protection of Western Europe, the United States, cannot be ignored.

The Soviets are again trying to include naval forces in the Vienna talks on conventional arms control.

Although Moscow doesn't like to hear it, this suggestion is unacceptable.

Safeguarding the vital transatlantic sea links remains an integral component of an effective Nato strategy.

Both naval forces and nuclear weapons are excluded from the mandate for negotiations on conventional arms control.

The main objective in Vienna is to reduce the Warsaw Pact's superiority (which it admits in its own figures) in terms of tanks, artillery and infantry combat vehicles.

These are the really dangerous categories, since they pave the way for a major attack. Neither naval forces nor aircraft have this task.

Aircraft could become an item of negotiation at some later stage. Nuclear weapons remain political weapons of deterrence.

As long as the Warsaw Pact does not demonstrably change the structure of its armed forces and its doctrine they are the main protective shield of the West.

This must always be kept in mind in the discussion on short-range weapons, a category in which the Warsaw Pact acknoweldges its own superiority.

The Nato mandate for negotiations, therefore, must be realistic and at the same time provide a positive response to the unilateral measures announced by Moscow, Prague, Warsaw and East Berlin.

The Soviets have indicated to their western partners that they will be making pragmatic, practical and realisable proposals in Vienna.

One can only hope that the negotiating parties will soon concentrate on the details.

More positive experience in the field of confidence-building measures will help.

It would be wrong, however, to expect rapid progress in Vienna.

Military and strategic facts will soon eclipse the optimistic opening speeches by the various Foreign Ministers.

The more the negotiators, especially their heads of state and government leaders, remain aware of the political background of their action, the better the prospects of taking security and cooperation in Europe into a new dimension.

Jan Reifenberg

(Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung für Deutschland, 2 March 1989)

Germany

Continued from page 1

Yet one small detail such as the question of the modernisation of short-range missiles would suffice to prevent renewed confusion.

Does Bonn want this modernisation at all or is it bent solely upon disarmament?

The new offer made by the Soviet deputy Foreign Minister Karpov to include nuclear short-range systems in the process of disarmament is bound to revive this discussion.

The forthcoming Vienna talks on conventional arms control will show how seriously the Soviets are about this proposal.

There is more behind this discussion than first meets the eye, and the German expression *Gesamtkonzept* (overall concept) so often ridiculed in the Nato does make sense.

What is meant is the basic stance needed in dealing with the East bloc "empire."

The discord which has existed between Bonn and its allies on this point since the speech in Davos by Bonn Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher in 1986 has yet to be reconciled.

Genscher's appeal not to miss the historical opportunity of the Gorbachov era meets with a reserved response.

Genscher would still like to convert the alliance to his view of East-West relations.

He is convinced that the West need have no fear about entering into a new round of negotiations on the basis of the systems in East and West.

The drastic practical experience of the current influx of ethnic Germans from Eastern European countries to the Federal Republic of Germany must confirm his conviction.

This development clearly shows the appeal of the West and the disillusionment at all promises for a better future by East bloc reformers.

It would be too little just to rely on this aspect. More tangible signs of western solidarity are needed.

Although the German unambiguity in its response to the Rushdie affair, for example, was helpful more is needed to create a new basis of trust between Bonn and its allies.

If Bonn moves too energetically towards Eastern Europe it may achieve the opposite of what it intends.

Foreign Minister Genscher knows better than anyone else that if there are doubts about the firm commitment of the Federal Republic of Germany to the West or the ability of German politics to soberly appraise realities even the best Ostpolitik will not get very far.

Gerhard von Glinski

(Rheinischer Merkur/Christ und Welt, Bonn, 3 March 1989)

The German Tribune

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■ HOME AFFAIRS

Conservative union rejects a change of direction after failure in Berlin

Regular and casual customers are concepts with which the CDU/CSU has indulged in a substantial amount of verbal sleight of hand since the Christian Democrats' debacle at the polls in Berlin, where many former CDU voters switched to the right-wing Republicans and others simply abstained.

Bavarian CSU leader Theo Waigel says the CDU/CSU must concentrate mainly on its regular clientele, and only then on its casual supporters.

Baden-Württemberg's CDU Premier Lothar Späth, in contrast, says a good businessman naturally takes good care of his regulars but is no less keen to solicit as much new custom as possible.

Do comparisons of this kind, taken from the world of retail traders, help CDU leader Helmut Kohl and his party to any great extent?

After talks between CDU and CSU leaders held at the end of February the clientele theory was not gone into in further detail. Herr Waigel referred to the middle of the road, the centre that must be the CDU/CSU's political ground, and Chancellor Kohl readily agreed.

No mention was made of an imminent swing of the political pendulum to either the left or the right.

That corresponds to Herr Kohl's viewpoint that a strategy debate, like a change of direction, is inappropriate at present.

How, in any case, is a popular party suddenly to switch direction? One of its characteristic features is that it absorbs a wide range of trends and appeals to a wide range of voters.

No one group of voters who sympathise with the CDU/CSU can expect all their ideas to be endorsed and all their wishes to be fulfilled by the Christian Democrats.

Groups of voters of this kind can only expect individual political decisions to be taken within a certain framework, compromises to be reached and extremist views not to prevail.

It would be illusory to expect more, and much the same applies to the other major popular party, the Social Democrats (SPD).

The SPD must accommodate both doctrinaire socialists and pragmatic market economists, while the CDU/CSU must accommodate both dogmatic Deutschlandpolitik proponents and advocates of a dynamic detente policy.

That alone is why the dispute within the CDU and between the CDU and the CSU and involving, say, Heiner Geissler and Ursula Lehr is somewhat artificial.

True, CDU general secretary Heiner Geissler, Family Affairs Minister Ursula Lehr and Bundestag Speaker Rita Süssmuth are blamed for all manner of evils that have beset the CDU/CSU, especially by members of the CSU.

Yet Herr Geissler, who is progressive on some issues, is as much a party of the CDU as is the conservative CDU/CSU parliamentary party leader Alfred Dregger.

To blame the CDU general secretary for the Berlin debacle and to sack him by way of punishment would not improve the CDU/CSU's opinion poll rating one iota. If anything, support might decline still further.

The problem that besets the CDU at present is not a lack of activity by the party machine for which the general secretary is to blame. Nor is it a directional dispute between conservative and progressive views, this dispute always having existed.

The perplexity that prevails in the CDU/CSU about what to do next, the gnawing sense of uncertainty into which the party is plunged by poor ballot box and opinion poll showings, is an immediate consequence of the Federal government's performance.

As the CDU is the senior partner in the Bonn coalition and its leader, Helmut Kohl, is the Federal Chancellor, it is hardest hit by any shortcomings that may arise in the government's performance.

After his talks with Herr Waigel the Chancellor sought to go on to the offensive and declare war on all tendencies toward coalitions between the Social Democrats and the Greens.

This declaration of war was made from Berlin, as it were, and then aimed at the entire country.

The CDU leader and head of government is naturally entitled to warn against pacts of this kind and to forecast trouble if they are forged.

But Herr Kohl and his party must not imagine they have thus hit on an issue that relegates all others to relative insignificance and will almost singlehandedly win them next year's general election.

If the CDU/CSU and the Bonn coalition are to emerge from the doldrums they must do so under their own steam and by dint of their own performance and not by criticising their opponents' weak points.

Oddly enough, both the Bonn government and the Chancellor seemed to be plain-sailing until shortly before Christmas.

The economy was faring better than expected, the health service reform had finally cleared its parliamentary hurdles and the government seemed to be less mishap-prone.

Within a few weeks this has all changed. The Libyan poison gas factory affair made it clear that the way the government is run still leaves much to be desired.

The health service reform proved not to be over and done with after all. The housing and university situations, Third World applicants for political asylum and ethnic German migrants from the East Bloc emerged as political issues that were potential dynamite.

The government showed signs of being increasingly hard-pressed. The time has now come, we are told, for decisions, for toned-up organisation, for concentration of effort and for better government.

The government's work is to be explained more convincingly, which is a task the Kohl government has set itself ever since it took office.

These good intentions may be laudable, but the CDU-CSU talks raised issues that are likelier to cause tension and sow the seeds of discord than to forge unity and relax tension.

Herr Waigel called for acceptance of the CSU's bid to make legal abortion more difficult, he called for action on asylum-seekers and he sounded CSU keynotes in family affairs policy.

The next round of talks is to be held on 18 April, but the CDU/CSU will probably have to wait longer for a cohesive government policy that nips all disputes in the bud.

Heinz Murmann

(Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger, Cologne, 1 March 1989)

SPD more hopeful as general election looms on horizon

In their seventh year in Opposition the Social Democrats seem to be back on the brink of power. Opinion poll ratings and fears voiced by their party-political opponents show them to have emerged as a factor to be taken seriously in next year's general election.

They are no longer hoping against hope that it will be impossible to ignore them when the next Bonn government is formed; their policy programme and their pragmatic approach are aimed fairly specifically at this very possibility.

Oskar Lafontaine, the man most likely to become the SPD's candidate for Chancellor, is determined to present an economic, financial and fiscal policy concept that will stand up to critical scrutiny as the policy of a party on the point of taking over power.

It remains to be seen whether he will succeed by the year's end in achieving the targets he has set his policy commission, dubbed Progress '90.

He envisages an extremely ambitious structural reform of the tax system. It is, for instance, to be economically sound, facilitating entrepreneurial competition within the single European market.

It is to be in keeping with the SPD's ecological objectives, such as by penalising high energy consumption more than is now the case.

It is also to be socially just and to comply with Social Democratic views on asset accumulation by the wage-earning and salaried classes.

This attempt to present future SPD policy in a practical guise will be the yardstick of the SPD's prospects as a potential party of government in the months ahead.

This presentation, rather than the fundamental policy debate, will be how voters judge whether the SPD is fit to govern in Bonn.

Or, that is, it would be were it not for signs that the general election campaign is likely to be waged on the basis of emotional appeals rather than political arguments.

The CDU/CSU has just decided to fight the SPD on the basis of the tried and trusted approach that worked so well in 1987.

The campaign seems likely to be based, sad to say, not on who is better qualified to handle economic and financial policy but on the disaster Helmut Kohl and Theo Waigel say an SPD-Green government would be for the country.

A campaign waged on this basis would, by merely generalising, achieve little or nothing by way of a sensible debate on the urgent tasks that lie ahead.

Yet that is how the CDU/CSU strategists want it to be waged. The greater the detail, they argue, the more difficult the Bonn coalition will find it to present itself successfully to the electorate.

On many issues there is a three-way split in the coalition, but the CDU, the CSU and the FDP can jointly attack the Social Democrats and the Greens without needing to clarify their policy on issues where they themselves are divided.

They include home and legal affairs, disarmament strategy and the shape of welfare and family affairs policy to come.

So the Social Democrats will need to demonstrate considerable skill in defending their role, so painstakingly built up under Hans-Jochen Vogel's leadership, as an Opposition with views that must be taken seriously, an Opposition that can hold its own.

The SPD cannot, of course, entirely ignore the issue of whether the Social Democrats will join forces with the Greens if need be.

Many potential SPD voters will only vote for an SPD they feel is likely to ensure stable government. The rules of the (coalition) game will be the crux of the matter.

On this point the coalition talks between the Social Democrats and the Alternative List in Berlin may only be at local government level, but they could set a trend for similar talks elsewhere.

The Social Democrats can only fight successfully a CDU/CSU campaign based on generalisations if they staunchly and steadfastly abide by their principles, based as they are on the constitution and on 40 years of democratic consensus.

They must also sound out the Greens as a potential coalition partner right down to the least political detail of any significance.

No matter how euphoric one may feel about new historic alliances, the Social Democrats would not have learnt the lesson of the 1980s if they were now to plunge into a pact with a party whose challenge to the SPD on specific issues is now on the decline.

At a time when opinion polls show Social Democrats and Greens to be going from strength to strength that calls for a great deal of rational self-awareness and, if need be, self-restraint.

The Social Democratic view of democracy cannot be to sideline a party that has enjoyed firm electoral support for years, yet it is clearly up to the Greens to show they are reliable and politically realistic.

If reform policies were to prove impossible to pursue on a stable basis in joint harness with the Greens at local, state or national level, the Social Democrats must be relied on either to set aside any idea of a coalition with the Greens or to quit one immediately in the event of a clash.

The SPD can only expect to survive CDU/CSU effrontery and Green embraces unscathed if this determination is beyond doubt, be it in Berlin or in Frankfurt or in Bonn.

Martin E. Süskind

(Süddeutsche Zeitung, Munich, 1 March 1989)

■ EURO POLITICS

Aliens-poll vote a break for Republicans

Franz Schönhuber, a former SS man and leader of the Republican Party, which did well at the polls recently in Berlin, is on the quiet delighted that elections to the European Parliament are shortly to be held.

Tactically, for the European Parliament election, it suits him and the Republicans that a chance majority in Strasbourg has advocated giving all foreign residents the vote in local government elections.

In a surprise coup there was a clear majority for a motion tabled by French Communist Francis Wurtz. Few seats in the Parliament were occupied at the time; only half of the 518 Euro-MPs were present.

This distorted the appeal for voting rights in local elections for European Community citizens into a vote for voting rights for all foreigners no matter from which country they originate.

In doing this the European Parliament has regretfully scored an own-goal. The question of foreigners has stirred up public opinion in the Federal Republic at the moment.

All shades of right-wing extremists, who see their chances since the favourable election result in Berlin, are bringing to the foreground in the European Parliament election xenophobia and a sense of nationalist feeling to attack Eurocrats and Euro-MPs in Brussels and Strasbourg who want nothing to do with the concept of "fatherland."

They are setting the mood for a new nationalism and against the European Community. The Republican cry is: "First Germany, then Europe."

Will their calculations pay off? Will the German electorate in the European Parliament elections on 18 June send anti-Europeans from the right and the Greens on the left to Strasbourg?

Pollsters warn that the cheap propaganda from the right is likely to fall on fertile ground.

Right-wing anti-Europe groups could profit from the widely held "paymaster theory," the belief that the Federal Republic foots the lion's share of the Community bill, and from xenophobia.

According to one survey about 60 to 70 per cent of voters are of the view that the door will be opened to narcotics dealers and criminals when controls within the single European market are dismantled.

Even if extreme right-wing German groups are not successful in getting into the European Parliament their participation in the election will not be without its advantages.

The points they have brought into focus will presumably have to be taken up by the other parties to defend themselves from attacks from the right.

Gerhard Schmid, an SPD European Parliament member, spoke of "themes that have brought about immobilisation." He said that right extremists had hobbled the democratic parties with these themes.

No-one had previously considered that the Republicans' Berlin election success would probably influence the European Parliament election. But it has introduced more conflict, more emotion.

Surveys have shown that the voting potential of the three established parties in Bonn, the Christian Democrats, the Free Democrats and the Social Democrats, is susceptible to the populist slogans of the right-wing.

Since 1984 the Free Democrats have been out of the European Parliament. Their leading candidate, Rüdiger von Wechmar, must make the leap into Strasbourg from the outside. For this reason the FDP is worried about the 18 June election.

The mood among the CDU-CSU and the SPD, just a few months before the election, is muted

For the SPD the election will be a test of the party's prestige for the Federal Republic's general election in 1990.

Can the SPD now outstrip the CDU/CSU? Can SPD leader Hans-Jochen Vogel convince his voters that the SPD has a chance of gaining a majority in the next general election?

The mood among the CDU/CSU is not very glowing and they are likely to have another setback on their hands.

The European Parliament election does not put a new government in power, so many voters feel there is little at stake. As a consequence protest voters could give the government a jolt without risk.

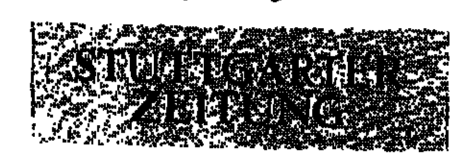
Apart from the populist slogans of the right there is danger from another quarter for the three established parties in Bonn.

According to a poll conducted last December about 40 per cent of the electorate have decided not to vote in the European Parliament election or they are not yet certain whether it is worth going to the voting stations or not.

In the second direct election in 1984 there was a drop to only 56.8 per cent of voter participation, and this tendency is continuing obviously. The parties are fearing the worst.

These fears have been strengthened by an obvious change of opinion, recorded not only by pollsters but also by Euro-politicians in direct contact with their constituents.

In spite of the sense of setting out on a new road, the single European market, common among our neighbours, there is



an increase in scepticism and anxiety in the Federal Republic about the disadvantages of the proposed opening up of frontiers within the European Community.

Last summer two-thirds of the people questioned in a survey regarded the single European market as a good thing: in December only a half of Germans questioned were of the opinion that the free movement of people, goods, capital and services was an advantage for them.

This scepticism stretches from the left to the right of the political spectrum.

It extends from the ecologists, who fear a European watering down of the allegedly strict West German environmental protection regulations, to trades unionists who speak of "social dumping" in the European Community.

It even includes Bavarian brewers and butchers, who complain about the decline of the German work break, because a ruling of the European Court of Justice has opened up German frontiers to foreign beer, soya sausages and French truffle paté.

Although the Federal Republic's economy will be the greatest gainer from the single European market, the

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Keeping alert in the Great Brussels Lobbyist Club

Brussels is like an enormous club of lobbyists. Anyone wanting to join in the game must keep on his toes.

Everyone of the 12 member-states have a representative in Brussels with the rank of ambassador.

When in 1987 the European Council signed the Single European Act, to set up the single European market at the end of 1992, the German *Länder*, or federal states, which have no legal responsibilities in European Community decision-making, struck a deal for a right to a say in European matters during Bonn's ratification of the Single European Act.

So as to be better informed about what is going on the federal states have their own listening posts in Brussels.

Hesse is the last of the 11 federal states to set up an information bureau. There have been observers, accredited to the Council of Ministers, from the *Länder* since 1956.

The Brussels bureau of observers with its sub-office in the Baden-Württemberg office in Bonn, is manned by three officials and jointly financed on the basis of the Königstein agreement.

This agreement concluded between the federal states in 1949 provides for sharing the cost of joint research facilities.

Despite the presence of the federal states in Brussels the institution of state observers has remained.

The Bonn government, which is solely responsible for representing the Federal Republic in the European Community, is obliged to keep the *Länder* informed on all European Community affairs.

Johannes Neukirchen, senior official in the Rhineland-Palatinate representation in Bonn, said: "It is up to the Bonn authorities to notify us and not for us to have to request information from the government."

This applies mainly to legal regulations which until now fell under the jurisdiction of the states, for instance the recognition all over the European Community of school and vocational final examinations.

Before Education Minister Jürgen Möllemann can negotiate with his Community colleagues on this, he must first report to the federal states on his scope of action in negotiations.

The offices of the states have already justified themselves as an early warning system.

This was so when the French threatened to complain to the European Court of Justice about the Federal Republic for having infringed Community regulations with the arrangement between coalmining and the power industry to use (dearer) German coal.

French nuclear power stations produce a surplus of power, which the French would very much like to export to the Federal Republic.

The power industry in Federal Republic is committed to buying domestic coal. The difference in price between German and (cheaper) imported coal is offset by an 8.5-per-cent surcharge on all electricity bills.

Getting information and opinions in good time is of particular importance for the coalmining regions of North Rhine-Westphalia and the Saar so as to take action in emergencies.

Most federal states have transferred their Europe department to their authorised representatives in Bonn. Herr Neukirchen says: "That is practical, because the strands of Community policy run together at central government."

Furthermore *Land* Ministers to the Bundesrat (Upper House) do not have specific portfolios and so can allow themselves the luxury of a controversial viewpoint.

Among them are also experts on Community matters, such as the Saar Minister for Federal Government and European Affairs, Ottokar Hahn. He is the driving force behind the "Permanent Council," the committee of the federal representatives.

After every Bonn Cabinet meeting they congregate in Room 13 of the Bundesrat for a briefing by Lutz Stavenhagen, Minister of State at the Chancellor's Office in charge of European Affairs.

Approximately 50 per cent of current Cabinet discussions concern European Community legislation. Herr Neukirchen says: "Hahn is such a professional that no-one pulls the wool over his eyes."

Before the federal states set up house in Brussels, they tried to integrate the observers into the Federal Republic's Permanent Representation at the European Community. That would have provided them with office accommodation and access to all information.

This foundered on questions of competence. Foreign Minister Genscher, as the "employer" of the German ambassador to the European Community, insisted on his seniority.

Furthermore the representation was not in a position to satisfy the various interests of all 11 federal states.

Manfred Frühauf of the Bavarian representation in Bonn tartly commented: "They only saw themselves as splendid diplomats."

The Bavarian representation still has to deal with enquiries, paper work and instructions on European matters. Like central government the Bavarian state government has set up a European affairs department in every ministry.

Former Community commissioner Wilhelm Haferkamp is regarded as a pioneer of federal state interests in Brussels.

His Hanseatic Bureau supplies the governments of Lower Saxony, Schleswig-Holstein and Bremen with information.

Hahn said that the "pooling solution" is not necessarily the most cost-effective.

The Saar's Office for Information and Economic Promotion in Brussels has an annual budget of DM180,000, employing three female staff members.

Hahn said: "Most of the other states have civil servants in their offices. That naturally costs more."

To be close to where all the action takes place, the European Commission headquarters at Berlaymont, Brussels is an advantage.

The Rhineland-Palatinate representation has found an address which is rich in connections: the corner of rue de la Loi and rue de Commerce.

The North Rhine-Westphalia representation has been very smart. They have set up their contacts office in the dual building which houses the branch of the state bank, the Westdeutsche

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■ PERSPECTIVE

The pros and cons of using economic boycott against Iran's theocracy

The Bundestag is presenting a rare picture of unanimity over the Salman Rushdie affair: all parties condemn Ayatollah Khomeini's call for the murder of the writer.

They are also united in a call for a "universal answer" to the Iranian religious leader's murder order.

In addition Heinrich Lummer, Berlin CDU Bundestag member, called for economic sanctions — a move his party has so far frowned upon.

The incitement to murder Mr Rushdie made by the Iranian ex officio religious leader has had more effect than the masses of opponents of the regime who have been hanged, or the thousands of boy soldiers who have been murdered, ordered into the Gulf War by fanatic mullahs as cannon fodder, sacrificed with the promise that they would instantly enter into paradise.

It only required a murder contract authorised by the Iran state to rouse the western world to solidarity against the totalitarian religious régime in Teheran.

Suggestions of economic boycott have not only been made in the Bundestag. Hans Peter Stihl, president of the Düsseldorf-based Federation of German Trades Unions, has committed himself in a way which is fairly rare among German businessmen.

Herr Stihl said that he could understand the demand for economic sanctions. He added that he was convinced that "in view of a confused and depressing internal situation in Iran, German businessmen would re-think their relationships with this country and take action accordingly."

More cannot be expected from German trade and industry for the murder threat against Mr Rushdie for his book *The Satanic Verses*.

Even the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, rather averse to economic sanctions, said: "It is impossible to do business with Ayatollah Khomeini, who is an enemy of law and civilisation."

Die Welt is alone in remaining reserved, holding up overriding principles of international trade. The daily wrote: "Bonn should not be carried away by all the indignation against Khomeini."

So far nothing has been decided. But before the British decide on a tougher line — Salman Rushdie is a British citizen — the Federal Republic should not get overenthusiastic about taking a lead.

Baron Rochus-Ernst von Lüttwitz, director of the Hamburg-based German-Iranian Chamber of Trade, has recommended member firms "to keep calm."

He is hoping that matters will not come to sanctions. He said: "German-Iranian economic relations are at the present marking time."

But, he added optimistically: "Everything should be put on the back-burner so that not too much goes up in flames."

West German exports to Iran during the eight-year Gulf War have not been inconsiderable. In the last year of the war, 1987, when the situation got ever more chaotic, West German exports to Iran were valued at DM3bn.

Compared with good years, when exports were valued at between DM7bn and DM8bn, that was not so much after all, still less measured in terms of what exports could be worth in the future.

After the end of the Gulf War, businessmen involved in Iranian trade expected a record export boom. Estimates of war damage hovered between $3bn and a trillion dollars.

Officials in Teheran estimated $100bn worth of damage had been inflicted on the Iranian oil industry alone. Reconstruction in Iran held out promises to exporters of full orderbooks.

Indeed Teheran newspapers moaned loudly about the swarming "predators" from the West, but the Germans were not included in this scolding.

Because they had patiently waited out the war years in Teheran, they were warmly welcomed with a special bonus in reconstruction.

Just a few weeks after the ceasefire at the industrial fair in Teheran in September last year, representatives from industry were convinced this was honestly meant.

Dieter von Würzen, state secretary at the Bonn Economic Affairs Ministry, was courted by the mullahs so assiduously that his aides felt like the new Teheran court suppliers.

A slogan of the official German-Iranian Chamber of Trade is: "Countries like Iran are few and far between."

At the end of last year Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher and Housing Minister Oscar Schneider visited Teheran. The pilgrimages of these ministers seemed to confirm what has indicated at the industrial fair.

The mechanical engineering industry alone calculated that over the next four years Iran would have a demand from the mechanical engineering sector worth about DM2.5bn.

Iranian officials made it quite clear how vital Western assistance was: harbours were destroyed, petro-chemical

DIE ZEIT

plant had been ruined, for years sugar factories had been rotting away, power stations were shattered, communications facilities had gone to seed and agriculture was lying fallow. All these were crying out for the expertise of German companies.

But during Foreign Minister Genscher's visit it was indicated that the good political relations vital for reconstruction were not going to be created as easily as it had been hoped.

The mullahs made clear to Herr Genscher what they thought about his admonitions about human rights.

The hangmen were busy at work in Teheran prisons while Herr Genscher was talking with his opposite numbers about the release of political prisoners.

The commitment of Iran to allow United Nations human rights representatives to visit the country without hindrance was not kept, despite many warnings from the Bonn Foreign Ministry.

Herr Genscher's patience was so taxed that he did not exercise his usual restraint after Khomeini's murder order and no longer opposed measures against Iran.

There had been friction between Bonn and Teheran in the negotiations for the arrangements for trading relations. Both were agreed that the joint German-Iranian Economic Commission should meet during this year.

The mullahs had got completly bogged down in the German demand that firstly the old Iranian debts to Bonn had to be paid — a modest DM100m.

Only when this debt had been settled was Bonn prepared to provide new state-guaranteed export credits.

Hans-Martin Burkhardt, who was preparing the sessions of the Economic Commission for the Economic Affairs Ministry, had the feeling "that in the foreseeable future we would come to an arrangement about the old debts." That was before Khomeini's incitement to murder.

Has everything gone to the dogs then? Herr Burkhardt was circumspect. He said: "Everything which was discussed in the last few weeks has certainly not gone to the dogs. It is undeniable that there has been a setback. We shall have to expect a slowing down of negotiations over weeks or perhaps months."

In any event Herr Burkhardt had warned industry about being too euphoric before the Rushdie affair blew up.

As ever it is hard to discern in which direction Iranian economic policies will go and particularly how reconstruction will be financed.

Internal disagreement about economic policies is fundamentally the cause of the latest escalation in Teheran's relations with the rest of the world.

For the past six months there has been a power struggle between the fundamentalists around Ayatollah Khomeini and Prime Minister Hussein Moussavi, and the pragmatists around Ali Akbar Rafsanjani, the liberal president of the Iranian Parliament, who is putting his name forward for the Iranian presidency.

Mr Rafsanjani calls for an opening up of Iran to the West: Khomeini and Moussavi want nothing to do with help from the outside.

As fervent Muslims they are pushing ahead with policies based on the Koran. They condemn credit as the "work of the Devil." The word is not in their vocabulary and they reject indebtedness in practice.

In the search for a way out in financing and credits which would not be so contentious, German industry has always shown itself to be obliging.

The Iranian suggestion to form a consortium of plant suppliers, oil purchasers and banks for financing projects was taken up constructively.

Gert D. Adomeit of the Bonn-based standing conference of chambers of commerce and industry said: "This consortium would arrange credits in the order of between DM3 and DM5bn for Iran. In return Iran would take up plant at competitive prices from the Federal Republic, which would be paid for exclusively by oil deliveries."

The West German market is only able to take up limited quantities of Iranian oil. Oil from Iran has a high sulphur content and it costs a lot of money processing it to make it meet high West German environmental protection standards.

Thomas Ukert of Esso in Hamburg is of the view, however, that if the purchase price is right it could be profitable to refine Iranian oil.

After all, in 1979 the Federal Republic imported 12 per cent of its oil requirements from Iran: today the figure is 3.6 per cent.

According to Herr Ukert the question of the regularity of supplies is much more decisive. Unlike the Japanese the Federal Republic did not rely on supplies from Iran so long as the Gulf War was being waged. This could be changed now.

But changes will not come about in the immediate future. For the time being all official contacts are broken off, so negotiations about the financing of Iranian reconstruction will have to be put on ice.

Baron von Lüttwitz said: "We cannot do what we intended to do to achieve stability in Iran and strengthen Western interests there."

It is doubtful whether the situation will change in the immediate future. Iranian experts are agreed that the condemnation of the Rushdie book and the incitement to murder its author was not a spontaneous act.

It was much more likely to have been managed with considerable calculation, aimed at strengthening Khomeini's theocracy, which was becoming unsteady, and putting the moderate forces on the fringe under pressure. This seems to have been successful.

There has been wide agreement with Khomeini's actions and the presidential election has been postponed from spring to summer. By doing this the fundamentalists have gained more time to discredit Mr Rasfanjani, who is popular among the people.

Most experts doubt that substantial economic sanctions would force the fundamentalist mullahs to turn back.

There are two aspects to economic sanctions. Should there be a total boycott the damage to West German exports would be limited, as would be the case with most Western industrialised nations.

At the present low volume of trade with Iran, German exports to the country add up to no more than one per cent of the total.

There has been much discussion of major projects but nothing concrete has materialised as yet.

After Housing Minister Schneider's visit to Teheran the construction industry had high hopes of many lucrative contracts, but a spokesman for the industry said: "We are not affected by the present crisis since there are no major building contracts at the moment."

Lufthansa has also not been hurt much by the halt to scheduled services to Teheran — two flights a week.

A boycott could be seen by Iran in quite a different way. A half of Iran's imports come from the West. Unlike Iraq, Iran is almost free of debt, but foreign currency reserves are almost exhausted and only oil exports can earn more.

It is estimated that Iran earns about $10bn per year from oil. Should Iran's major oil customers, the USA, Japan and the Netherlands, agree on an oil boycott the mullahs would have no money in a very short space of time.

That would not have any influence on them, however. Economist Heinrich Machowski of the Berlin-based German Institute for Economic Research regards economic embargoes as far too imprecise an instrument of policy. He said: "It would not affect the government. The affects would be shifted to the people."

Sanctions would bring with them the danger that they would be regarded by the people as an international plot against Iran and the mullahs would trigger off another wave of solidarity with themselves.

Wolfgang Hoffmann

(Die Zeit, Hamburg, 3 March 1989)

■ BUSINESS

Bankers and police swarm round ailing retail group



Five public prosecutors, 35 detectives and 15 fiscal authority inspectors swarmed out in mid-February for a major investigation.

The targets of this operation were the Frankfurt headquarters of the wholesale and retail company group co op AG, its subsidiaries in other cities and the residential premises of former members of the group's managing board and its chief acccountant.

It has become clear that the liabilities of the giant enterprise were probably six times higher than in the company's accounting statements.

There are not yet sufficient grounds to warrant a charge of fraud. Such a discrepancy between internal calculations and published company statements, however, suggest that there soon will be.

This is the story from the point of view of criminal law.

The whole affair has been accompanied by dramatic meetings of the 120 creditor banks to work out a rescue plan to save the group from bankruptcy.

The banks have agreed to waive claims amounting to billions of deutschmarks and to buy one of the group's production subsidiaries to get the money for the rescue operation.

It is still not clear how much will be needed, since it uncertain just how much the integration of the international business of the co op AG, which is consolidated in the Swiss Garvey holding company, will burden the overall calculation.

The transactions in connection with this holding company sheds some light on the business conduct of the co op group.

Co op repurchased the Garvey holding company, the majority shareholder in a Hamburg-based real estate company which owns property worth an estimated DM1.6bn.

The repurchase was only possible through the company Burlington Ltd., the sole holder of the Swiss holding company, which resides on the Cayman Islands.

The letter-box company only has $900,000 worth of capital. Only one share was issued at the par value of $1. This belonged to a lawyer in Liechtenstein.

There are speculations that the man behind the lawyer was Bernd Otto, the chairman of the co op group who has in the meantime been dismissed without notice.

Right from the very start Otto, a resolute and power-conscious person, shaped the development of the group which emerged from the trade union movement.

The former secretary of the Federation of German Trade Unions (DGB) became chairman of the managing board of the co op, which was set up in 1974, in 1980.

Up until well into the 1980s the group had to come to terms with its past errors.

It had to incoporate the former consumers' cooperative into the group and effect the necessary modernisation.

Otto, who soon dissociated himself from the trade unions and placed particular emphasis on the fact that the group was not a non-profit organisation, set about sorting out the group's problems.

Following his decision to expand he discovered that he had a significant disadvantage in comparison with his competitors.

He lacked the money needed to keep pace with the "acquisition rush" which had seized the entire industry at that time.

It was not easy to persuade the trade unions to increase share capital. Otto tried his luck with bank loans.

With their help he bought three food chains with a total turnover of DM2bn in autumn 1987.

The dependence on banks grew and grew. Part of corporate policy was to keep the group's structures as obscure as possible.

Otto's aim was to create a group by setting up new businesses, changing the legal forms of existing firms and selling off shares which would enable problems to be solved on an "in-group" basis.

The justification given for this policy was to save tax. The network which emerged became more and more confusing.

Otto then let the Schweizer Bankverein sell part of the group's capital on the stock exchange.

The supervisory board members who should have put a stop to this policy failed to fulfil their duties. Some of them may have lacked the qualifications for the job. Others may have been too closely attached to cooperative objectives, which are orientated to covering costs rather than making a profit.

Many a supervisory board member may have been so entangled in the web of intra-group links that he looked the other way when he should have shown greater scrutiny.

The tragic suicide attempt by the deputy chairman of the co op supervisory board Günter Döding, head of the food and catering trade union, would suggest that, as in the case of the scandal surrounding the Neue Heimat housing group, some supervisory board members were offered trips abroad and other "presents" to persuade them not to be so strict in their supervisory control.

However, we should avoid jumping to the conclusion that inadequate supervision is typical for companies run by the trade unions.

There are plenty of examples of similar shortcomings in capitalist enterprises.

In co op's case there was an obvious desire to create a confusing wickerwork of company links with insufficient share capital and incomprehensible ownership structures.

In the end no-one knew who owed how much to whom. This went unnoticed for so long because the supervisory board members failed to do their job properly.

Level-headed trade unionists have drawn their conclusions from the fate of the Neue Heimat and the co op groups. They openly admit that being entrepreneurs is not really up their street.

Rudolf Herlt

(Die Welt, Bonn, 2 March 1989)

Subject of speculation . . . Bernd Otto. (Photo: dpa)

The blue logo

The co op group with its annual turnover of a good DM12bn and its 50,000 employees is one of the five biggest German retailing enterprises.

The following groups, which also have a strong market position in the classic food business, are co op's main competitors: Aldi, Tengelmann, Rewe-Leibbrand, Metro and Asko-Massa.

The co op network encompasses 2,200 branches. The Frankfurt-based group does not only trade under the co op logo with its blue squares.

In the wake of growing concentration in the retail trade as a whole co op has also long since ceased to be just a food company group.

Under chain names such as Plaza Bienefeld, Hush Puppies, Mayer Schuh und Sport, Richter Spiel und Hobby, Bolle, Safeway, Schade und Füllgrabe, Wandmaker, Promarkt and Baumarkt it sells goods ranging from toys and clothes to lawn-mowers.

In the light of recent events, co op beat a retreat in the field of consumer electronics: the takeover candidate Phora in Mannheim retained its independence.

As opposed to most of its competitors co op is no longer just a retail distribution group, but also produces goods itself.

The co op Industrie AG (Dortmund) includes firms which produce meat and sausages, chocolate and confectionery as well as a spirits bottling firm.

In addition, co op owns various foreign firms, shareholdings and real estate.

The group is organised in an incomprehensible structure of interlocking company links, which makes it extremely difficult to identify the real ownership structures.

Four foreign banks (the Schweizer Bankverein, the Dutch Amro Bank, the American Security Pacific National Bank and the Swedish Svenska commercial banks) have a 72 per cent stake in the share capital of the parent company co op AG (DM450m).

The rest is owned by small shareholders, the co op pension fund and various institutional investors.

Part of the capital (DM30.9m) was distributed at the stock exchange in autumn 1987. *dpa*

(Nordwest Zeitung, Oldenburg, 25 February 1989)

Link mooted between suicide bid and newspaper report

Günter Döding, 58, chairman of the food and catering union Gewerkschaft Nahrung-Genuss-Gaststätten (NGG) was last month discovered lying in a pool of blood in his office after what is believed to be a suicide attempt. He is now said to be off the danger list. The union is entangled in the co op affair. Co op is a retailing group which has run into financial trouble and there are allegations of irregularities in the accounts.

Günter Döding ranks as a trailblazer in the trade union movement.

Since 1978 the collective bargaining expert has headed the relatively small but tradition-conscious food and catering union Gewerkschaft Nahrung-Genuss-Gaststätten (NGG), which has about 265,000 members.

Döding now unexpectedly finds himself entangled in the affair surrounding the co op retailing group.

The NGG leader has been deputy chairman of the co op supervisory board since 1975.

In the co op scandal the public prosecutor's office is investigating against co op chairman Bernd Otto, three other members of the co op managing board and the group's chief accountant on the strong suspicion of a falsification of accounts.

Döding, who holds numerous posts and honorary posts, was particularly praised following his decision to donate his salary as member of the supervisory board (over DM100,000 a year) for trade union educational work without making any personal deductions.



Found in pool of blood . . . union chief Döding. (Photo: dpa)

Trade union circles feel that there is a link between the report published in the weekly magazine *Der Spiegel* on presents and trips paid for by the co op group and the union leader's attempted suicide.

In 1982 Döding and his wife suffered tremendously after their only child, their 20-year-old daughter Petra, died.

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■ BUSINESS

You just order it and Otto just mails it — anywhere in the world

Mail order magnate Michael Otto has three marked character traits: persuasiveness, discretion and enthusiasm. They correspond to three elementary sectors in his life.

He deploys his rhetorical talent as board chairman of Otto-Versand in the firm's interest; he is reluctant to divulge details of his private life; he readily and keenly discusses his hobby, modern art.

As a businessman he has plenty to say for himself. He runs a Hamburg company that has become the world's largest mail order group.

Group turnover in 1987/88 was DM12bn, up 11.3 per cent, with a payroll of 28,000 and 23 wholly-owned firms or holdings in 10 countries.

Eighteen years ago Otto-Versand's turnover was DM1bn.

Michael Otto has three entrepreneurial guidelines: the customer must hold pride of place, the range must be aimed at categories of customer and the company must see the whole world as its oyster.

There is nothing new about the idea that the customer is king — any more than there is in the adage that not everything can be sold to everyone.

But Otto-Versand can fairly claim not to have been outdone in covering the entire world.

The group has mail order firms of its own in Austria, Belgium, Britain, France, Holland, Japan, Spain and the United States. This year they will be joined by a subsidiary in Italy. Negotiations with Italian companies are said to be on the brink of conclusion.

A Hamburg newssheet, the "Wupper Mergers & Acquisitions Report," headlined a recent article about the group: "Otto-Versand: 'Acquisition... is just fine!'"

The headline, based on an Otto-Versand advertising slogan, was said to stand for the ease with which Michael Otto had forged ahead with group expansion and diversification since 1985 by buying up (and into) other companies.

His first successful venture of this kind was in 1981, when he took over the reins of management. He made a successful takeover bid for the US mail order company Spiegel Corp.

"The American market," he says, "was an interesting dimension from our point of view, and Spiegel was a company with hidden potential."

Spiegel Corp. was the fourth-largest US mail order firm, but it had "nothing else, nothing better and nothing more convincing in its product range than its competitors in the US market," Otto says.

His staff soon changed that, streamlining the product range and aiming it mainly at working women earning good money.

Spiegel's delivery service was improved and rationalised too.

In 1981 every item ordered was handled eight times before it was packed ready for mailing and delivery.

Articles are now handled just three times. In Chicago, as in Hamburg, the motto is: "Pick, put, pack."

Spiegel has since trebled turnover, which is higher than what Otto paid for the company in 1981, he says.

Further acquisitions in the United States have been sports and men's wear mail order specialist Eddie Bauer and a high-quality, high-price women's clothing mail order firm, Honey Bee.

Both have helped Otto-Versand to reach its target group among American consumers.

Five years after his first major takeover Michael Otto set about what may fairly be called his masterpiece, joining forces with Sumitomo to set up Otto-Sumisho, a mail order company in Japan.

They launched the venture in 1986, but Otto is still adding the finishing touches. Everything is different in Japan. "Working there," Michael Otto says, "you never stop learning something new."

The most difficult problem is that there have only been mail order firms in Japan for a few years, so Japanese consumers must first be accustomed to the idea of ordering through the post.

Confidence-building is what counts, he says, banking on the modern, working Japanese woman earning money of her own:

"We believe our women customers are keen on shopping practically and conveniently."

Their custom must first be solicited, but advertising in the Far East is entirely different from advertising in the West.

"Any fashion magazine in Germany is delighted to accommodate an advertiser," Michael Otto says. "Not so in Japan, where there are waiting lists of two to three years."

Another example of how different Germany and Japan are is the length of time complaints take to handle on the telephone in Tokyo:

"In Germany customers who ring to register complaints come straight to the point. In Japan they first explain that they are well-disposed toward the company in principle, then — and only then — say what the trouble is."

Despite these differences — and the time it takes to appreciate them — Otto-Versand's Asian commitment is going ahead on schedule.

Turnover is currently DM90m a year, with a target of DM500m a year by 1992. Michael Otto is convinced this target can be achieved.

In outlining his internationalisation strategy he is as eloquent with his hands and eyes as he is in what he says.

He goes in for plain words and clear gestures. The wrinkles at the corner of his eyes are from laughing, not from worrying.

He is in good physical shape for a man who will shortly be 46, and he seems to have enjoyed life so far, arguably because of the responsibility he has shouldered, not despite it.

Yet he is reluctant to talk about his private life. "What," he asks, "am I to say about myself?"

He could, for instance, say that he wrote poems as a 16-year-old and wanted to be a writer, then seriously considered studying medicine.



Expansion course . . . Otto's Michael Otto. (Photo: Otto-Versand)

But he grew up alongside his father and the family firm. Werner Otto built up the mail order business from 1949. It was in the blood.

Michael Otto learnt banking in Munich, studied economics and wrote a PhD on Forecasting Sales in the Mail-Order Business.

In 1971, aged 28, he joined the board of his father's firm, assuming responsibility for buying textiles.

Werner Otto was by then on the supervisory board, with Günther Nawrath as managing director.

His father didn't urge him to join the firm, but he was naturally delighted when he did. There was no conflict between father and son either.

That was largely because his father was no longer concerned with the day-to-day running of the firm and was not, so to speak, his boss.

"I was lucky enough to have the opportunity of gaining inner independence," Michael Otto says, "and, via the training I had undergone, an outer independence."

In switching the subject to his hobby, modern art, he almost physically seems to become a different person.

His views on the subject are no less forthright than his commitment to company affairs, but he presents them in a much more impassioned manner.

He is keenly interested in modern art, which he describes as his personal hobby. Prints and original works of art line the walls of both the lobby at head office and the corridors of the various departments.

"I am all in favour of encouraging young artists and hope both to promote their work and to persuade my staff to take a closer look at it."

Besides, he feels modern art is more in keeping with the corporate image than prints of Old Hamburg.

A picture in his office testifies to his readiness to consider controversial approaches to modern art. It is by the packaging artist Christo and features the Berlin Reichstag as Christo would like to package it.

Otto finds Christo's idea good "because it brings the town planning problems faced by the (divided) city centre of Berlin to the fore, directs attention to the history of the Reichstag and might influence the art debate in the GDR too."

Michael Otto is evidently as willing to take up unconventional ideas as he is persuasive, discreet and enthusiastic.

Ralph Boeddeker

(Welt am Sonntag, Hamburg, 19 February 1989)

■ THE ECONOMY

In search of an elusive perfect balance (and settling for something less)

What we need is equilibrium, not hectic fluctuations. An economy, however, is very rarely in a perfect state of balance.

One can be satisfied if it oscillates somewhere near the point of equilibrium.

At the moment a further cornerstone (in addition to the objective of full employment) of the "magic square" of economic policy goals is off balance: price stability.

We were once convinced that this magic square of economic growth, full employment, price stability and balance of payments equilibrium could be kept stable with the help of the *macroeconomic* policy measures of the national government.

Today it is clear that such national management hardly works in an interpenetrated international economic environment (not to mention the shortcomings of national government policies).

Former Bonn Chancellor Ludwig Erhard had an almost easier task in this respect.

When he began ridding the young Federal Republic of Germany of the jumble of controls and regulations following the 1948 currency reform the Deutsche Mark was nowhere near being a convertible currency.

This soon changed, not because the



government politicians or heads of the central bank were so efficient, but because entrepreneurs had become more willing to take risks.

The Federal Republic of Germany tries to maintain the equilibrium envisaged in the "magic square" by means of *sensitive* policy tools, including the advice of scientific experts for political decision-makers, rather than by means of investment control.

Just over 25 years ago, on 14 February, 1964, the Council of Economic Experts for the Assessment of Overall Economic Trends (popularly known as the "five wise men") convened for the first time.

This panel of independent economic experts was set the task of analysing and evaluating the economic development, but is not allowed to make recommendations or politicise in any way.

Right from the start, however, there was no way of preventing the inclusion of the Council's findings in the discussions on day-to-day politics.

The quality of the Council's reports has varied over the years.

As they are generally differentiated and refrain from reducing matters to black and white terms respective governments and opposition groups often cited these reports as confirmation of their own policies or criticism.

Several years after the panel was set up the Law Promoting Stability and Growth of the Economy (Gesetz zur Förderung der Stabilität und des Wachstums) was introduced on 8 June, 1967.

Ludwig Erhard was no longer Chancellor by this time.

The most important groundwork for the law, however, was carried out during his period as government leader.

Although he fostered the project he was not completely convinced about its usefulness despite the law's excellent provisions and the policy tools based on Keynesian principles.

This law was intended as the start of a new era.

Prior to the law the guiding motto had been to loosen up all rigidities and let matters take their own course.

Then the motto changed to macroeconomic influence with the help of market-conforming instruments.

Karl Schiller operated along these lines and found a like-minded partner in Bonn's Finance Minister at the time, Franz Josef Strauss.

However, even former Bonn Economics Minister Schiller no longer unreservedly favours the policy of macroeconomic management (*Globalsteuerung*).

The Stability Law has almost been forgotten and no longers ranks as the economic policy miracle remedy.

Fiscal policy in particular shows just how insignificant this law has become.

According to Section 6 of the law debts should have been repaid and anticyclical reserves invested during the period of moderate growth which has now lasted for seven years. Far from it!

Anticyclical fiscal policy — put more simply: spending a lot of money if there is a risk of an economic downswing and collecting the money again if the economy is in good shape — only worked between 1966 and 1969.

Today, for example, with industry moving dangerously close to overheating, liquidity should be skimmed off.

For foreign trade reasons, however, this is more difficult than the legislator originally believed.

Many dreams have had to be buried simply because the government is unable to contain countercyclical movements despite a sophisticated system of economic forecasting.

This does not mean that the government has no option but to resign itself to the role of night watchman.

What is should do is concentrate to a greater extent than it has done so far on the parameters of the general economic framework.

And this in a period of a growing awareness of environmental problems, following the initial phase of a return to the market, a second phase of attempted macroeconomic management, and a (unfinished) phase of withdrawing from economic activity and a spoon-feeding of individuals.

The government must change the conditions accordingly, conditions which must apply to *everyone* in a competitive economy.

The best way to develop an efficient pay-as-you-pollute principle is *to link* it to the market.

The envisaged flat-rate *scrapping* bonus of DM200, for example, is too awkward.

If the dealers of car manufacturers were forced to take back cars ready for the scrap heap this would be passed on to prices — and would stimulate designers to think more seriously about waste disposal costs.

This is just *one* example of how and where the generally overrated government could, and should, exert its influence.

Maybe the Stability Law will reappear on the scene at some stage in the future to try to achieve an equilibrium which it will probably never achieve in its perfect form.

Franz Thoma

(Süddeutsche Zeitung, Munich, 25 February 1989)

Continued from page 6

Döding has been married since 1953.

Döding's political influence on other trade unions and in the Federation of German Trade Unions (DGB) is astonishing.

He also has a strong position in the SPD's trade union council, where he is classed as a right-winger.

In Döding's opinion, "an out-and-out strategy of conflict leads directly to a weakening of the trade union movement."

Döding and the NGG have done pioneer work in the field of pay settlements.

The former early retirement provisions and the current partial retirement plans are rooted in ideas first advocated by Günter Döding.

Döding, however, wanted the partial retirement regulations to be an additional measure and not a follow-on measure for the early retirement regulation in the form now introduced by the Bonn government.

dpa

(Mannheimer Morgen, 23 February 1989)

■ SPACE RESEARCH

X-ray satellite will open another window to the universe

A German X-ray satellite, Rosat, is due to be launched in February next year. If all goes well the X-ray data it relays from outer space will enable astrophysicists to compile a comprehensive X-ray chart of the universe.

Astronomers have opened up all manner of windows looking out into the universe and its increasingly remote and distant past.

One of the most important advances this century has been the use of radio waves for scientific observation of the cosmos.

But stars and galaxies emit another kind of radiation that has only lately lent itself to observation: X-rays.

Astronomers hope X-ray exposures of the universe will reveal details of physical cosmic processes that have hitherto been either inaccessible or only partially accessible to observation.

They hope, for instance, to learn more about quasars, so distant and still so mysterious, about dual stars and black holes.

X-rays are emitted when electrically charged particles of matter are accelerated in a field or at extremely high temperatures (over 100,000° C).

In a number of dual star systems consisting of celestial bodies that rotate round each other like the Earth and the Moon, the compact star has such a power field of gravity that it attracts matter from the other.

This matter is heated in a so-called accretion disc before reaching the compact star, emitting X-rays in the process.

X-rays are also emitted in the vicinity of black holes, invisible sources of gravity that engulf and devour any matter that comes near them.

An X-ray observatory cannot be set up on Earth because this radiation is totally absorbed in the upper atmosphere.

That is why there have only been X-ray exposures of outer space since the 1960s when the United States put the Uhuru satellite into orbit.

A number of X-ray satellites have since been launched. One of the most recent was the European Exosat, which went off the air in 1986 after three years in eccentric terrestrial orbit.

Observation has so far invariably been limited to individual celestial objects, about 10,000 of which have been located.

But an exhaustive chart of stars that emit X-rays has not yet been compiled. A new venture aims to remedy this state of affairs.

If everything now goes ahead according to schedule (after many difficulties and delays) the most ambitious X-ray observatory yet will be launched in February 1990.

Astrophysicists hope it will enable them to identify over 100,000 sources of radiation and chart the heavens. Rosat is an all-German project financed by the Federal Research Ministry via the German Aerospace Research Establishment (DFVLR). The main contractors are Dornier of Immenstaad, Lake Constance, with Messerschmitt-Bölkow-Blohm (MBB) and Carl Zeiss as main suppliers. The scientific management will be handled by the Max Planck Institute of Extraterrestrial Physics in Garching, near Munich.

Rosat is one of the biggest satellites ever built in Europe. (Photo: Dornier)

The satellite's payload will also include a British experiment to observe ultraviolet radiation and a high-resolution X-ray detector developed by Nasa, the US National Aeronautics and Space Administration.

The project has been planned for about 10 years and is expected by project manager Edgar Bachor of Dornier to cost the industrial companies associated with it about DM240m.

The project can already look back on a chequered history. Initial plans date back to 1977; the feasibility study on which it was formally based was carried out in 1979.

Contracts to develop and manufacture project equipment were not awarded until October 1983, when the satellite was expected to be launched on board the US space shuttle toward the end of 1987.

The satellite was to have been launched free of charge in return for allowing Nasa to carry out its X-ray detector experiment on board.

When the Challenger catastrophe floored the US space research programme in January 1986 it was clear that the Rosat launch would have to be postponed.

Development difficulties had already made a delay until early 1988 inevitable, but US shuttle redevelopment and rescheduling of priorities made several years' further delay seem likely.

There were plans to use another launcher, a rocket, in collaboration with Nasa, with whom contracts had been signed.

Rosat would clearly need to be converted to different external dimensions and a different link with its carrier, but that posed no fundamental problems.

For a few months plans were geared to an Atlas Centaur until Nasa finally committed itself to a Delta II as a launcher vehicle.

Conversion took about two years, accompanied by unexpected difficulties at Carl Zeiss, where the layer of gold, the reflector, fell far short of requirements where homogeneity was concerned.

An entirely new production facility had to be developed and built. The gold was eventually sprayed onto the reflector rather than steamed onto it as originally planned.

Zeiss can now fairly claim to have built the world's smoothest reflector, so smooth as to qualify for an entry in the Guinness Book of Records.

If the reflector's surface area were the size of Lake Constance the tallest hump, or deviation from absolutely plane, would be 0.1mm.

This record reflector will one day be able to distinguish between cosmic X-ray sources only a few arc seconds apart.

It has been finished and ready for use since June 1988, while the Rosat's X-ray telescope is in storage in a dust-free room in Immenstaad awaiting final adjustment.

Dornier have now announced that the satellite has arrived from Munich after several months of successful stress trials.

Rosat weighs two and a half tonnes and is about 4.5 by 4.5 by 2.5 metres in size, making it one of the largest satellites so far built in Europe.

Following conversion it resembles a long rectangular box with retractable solar paddles.

It looks nothing like a conventional reflector or lens telescope. X-rays are not reflected or refracted by matter: they simply pass through it.

They are only reflected when they almost pass by, just stroking the surface at a very wide angle.

This factor is used in X-ray telescopes. Rosat's reflector looks like four cylindrical tubes of reflecting ceramic glass of varying diameters inserted into each other, as it were.

In reality each cylinder consists of two halves, the first of which, nearer the telescope opening, is parabolic in shape, collecting the X-rays.

The rear semi-cylinder is hyperbolic in shape, which reduces errors in reproduction and the focal length.

The rays converge on one of two measuring devices that count the number of X-ray quanta and register their energy.

They can be replaced automatically by the Nasa detector.

Rosat is to orbit the Earth at an altitude of 580km (350 miles), spending six months doing nothing but charting the sky.

For a further year it will then be available for long-term scientific observation of cosmic X-ray sources, with unprecedented sensitivity and high resolution guaranteed.

Rosat will relay all data to a ground station at Weilheim, near Munich, — always assuming the hopes of all concerned with the project are fulfilled and it is launched successfully and without mishap next February.

Rainer Klüting

(Stuttgarter Zeitung, 18 February 1989)

■ LITERATURE

The serious author stands up with his blue book still intact

Erich Kästner is world-famous for his children's books, particularly *Emil und die Detektive*, published in 1929, but there was a more serious side to his work as a writer which is not so well known. His books were banned and burned in 1933, but he stayed on in Germany to be "an eyewitness and one day give evidence," as he wrote in his diary. He would have been 90 in February; he died in 1974.

Before Berliners had any real idea about air raids and bomb attacks, before curious children scrambled through the first bombed homes looking for shrapnel, which they swopped at school, before "unwelcome" citizens had left or been stripped of their nationality, arrested or sent to concentration camps, Erich Kästner, successful author and film script-writer, wanted to remain.

He preferred to stay and be an eyewitness to what was happening and what would happen.

Despite the fact that he was given warnings, despite the fact that his books were burned in 1933, despite the fact that his name was already on the unwanted list, he did not want to go away but be a member of the multitude who stayed in the Third Reich "yet kept a diary."

He wrote in *Notabene 45*, the title under which his diaries were published: "During the Third Reich there was inconspicuously on my bookshelves a blue book, whose pages were empty, at least at first. This harmless empty volume was the notebook in which I recorded insidious things.

"I filled the empty pages with shorthand outlines. I recorded under keywords events which I did not want to forget for a future novel. Three times I began a diary, each time for six months, in 1941, 1943 and 1945.

"Until 1943 the blue book was hidden away among the four thousand other books on the shelves. Because the air raids had become so alarming, I put it in my briefcase, which never left my hand, along with my reserve sponge bag, my torch, my bank book and other articles. In this way it escaped the fire which burnt the other four thousand books.

"My blue book still exists, along with my bank book. Both are documents of their time. The entries in the bank book have lost their worth now, but the notes in the diary hopefully have not."

Erich Kästner would have been 90 in February. He died 15 years ago in Munich on 29 July 1974.

He would probably have liked to have lived longer than 75 years for he was never idle, even if he was quieter and more domesticated in his later years, according to his friend Hermann Kesten.

Kesten recalled: "Fundamentally, in his old age, he was more himself. If he was asked what he was working on — a novel? — he replied: on myself."

In 1961, when his diary *Notabene 45* was published by the Atrium Verlag, Zürich, there appeared at the same time the *Deutsches Schriftstellerlexikon*, published by the Volksverlag Weimar in East Germany.

This volume classified German writers, "from the beginning to the present day" as "proletarian" or "bourgeois".

The entry for Kästner read: "Kästner, Erich. Born 23.2.1899 Dresden; bourgeois-humanist writer, mainly a satirist. Began as a left-wing bourgeois critic of the bourgeois life style.

"Has today accepted the bourgeois social order without surrendering his reservations (anti-militarism). K. comes from the petty bourgeoisie."

This despite the fact that his father, Emil Richard Kästner, was a hard-working upholsterer, who could barely feed his small family.

Kästner later wrote: "My father was chased out of the kitchen. He was exiled. From then on in the evenings he sat in the cellar behind the crate, between piles of coal and potatoes, wearing a cardigan and thick carpet slippers.

"This was his workshop. Here the smoke from his cigar swirled up in the air. There in the cellar he heated his glue, bubbling away on a spirit stove."

His mother, whom he loved, was just as busy. She was a hairdresser. She had learned to do hair when she was 35 so as to feed her family and finance her son's studies.

Erich Kästner wrote his PhD thesis on the views on literature of Frederick the Great in Leipzig. Then he felt that fortune was pushing him to go to Berlin.

Erich Kästner was also hard-working. At first he wrote sketches and thoughtful freelance items for the *Neue Leipziger Zeitung*.

Then he was taken on as a working student and, later, hired as a full-time journalist by Richard Katz, the newspaper's managing director, who had read what he had written with satisfaction.

Then this welcome extra money suddenly stopped, when Kästner published an erotic poem entitled *Abendlied eines Kammervirtuosen*, which began with the harmless lines: "You, my last, my ninth symphony, when you wear the pink-striped nightie..."

In what was Beethoven's death centenary year the rival *Leipziger Neueste Nachrichten* raised a rumpus, claiming the poem was a disgrace. The young writer was dismissed on the spot.

For the young man from Dresden, who wanted to be a teacher, Berlin in the 1920s was just the place to be. What did he learn? He became what Nazis of the "Blood and Earth" variety called an "asphalt" or "coffee house" writer.

His friend Hermann Kesten got to know him in 1927 at a tea party in a villa in the Grunewald to which he had been invited by the widow of Siegfried Jacobsohn, the founder of the left-wing weekly *Weltbühne*.

Kesten said of Kästner: "Yes, the coffee house was where he communed with his muse, it was his study, the place in Berlin where he met his friends and girlfriends, his office, where he dictated to his secretaries."

He continued: "We both came from the provinces, I from Nuremberg. We were both radical but not Marxists. We were both pacifists without belonging to a pacifist organisation.

"We did not join any political party, and took sides, politically and in a literary sense, with justice, freedom and against social oppression, against militarism, chauvinism and inhumanity."

It is not surprising that Kästner got more and more into difficulties.

His first two books, the volume of poetry *Herz auf Taille*, and his children's book *Emil und die Detektive*, later filmed, made him world-famous by 1928.

In October 1934 he wrote to his mother in Dresden (he did so almost every day):

"It seems that there is something particularly bad to be said about me, because Klaus Mann has reprinted in his newspaper abroad something from my books. Now the authorities think that I sent it to him."

In 1936, the year the Olympic Games took place in Berlin, another volume of his work was published, *Doktor E. K.'s lyrische Hausapotheke*, but that was the end.

Secretly Kästner made contact with a publishing house in Zürich. Until 1942, that is, when suddenly he was given special permission to work on film scripts under a pseudonym, for the films *Baron Münchhausen* and *Der kleine Grenzverkehr*.

The contacts with the film people eventually saved him. He left Berlin with

Erich Kästner
(Photo: Sven Simon)

false papers in March 1945 and saw the ending of the war as a member of a UFA film unit in the Zillertal.

In August 1945 he went to Munich, helped to set up the cabaret "Die Schaubude" and was head of the arts pages of the *Neue Zeitung*, licensed by the Americans.

Although Kästner wrote many successful books he had doubts about his abilities to write "the novel of the years 1933 to 1945."

The more he doubted the more he cherished the idea of writing such a book.

He said: "One cannot organise a list of victims and executioners, millions long. One cannot compose in statistical terms. Anyone who takes that on will not produce a great novel, only an orderly, but deformed, bloody address book, seen from the artistic point of view."

From 1951 to 1960 Kästner was president of the Federal Republic's PEN Club, and honorary president until his death.

When Kästner was awarded the Büchner Prize in Darmstadt, he spoke in his acceptance speech about Büchner's drama and then came back to the theme of his diary.

He said: "When I thought about historical material I wondered why there were no historical comedies... Naturally I know that a Prussian king plays a part in *Minna von Barnhelm* without actually appearing on stage. But it is hard to refute my assertion that there are many marvellous historical tragedies but no historical comedies.

"I content myself with the supposition that the book of history is a particularly serious and sad read. There is nothing to laugh about in it."

Unfortunately this very serious Kästner is less popular or well-known than is the author of the successful books and films, such as *Das fliegende Klassenzimmer, Die doppelten Lottchen, Pünktchen und Anton* and *Der 35. Mai*.

The wish of the "neat young man" from Dresden has obviously been fulfilled.

Kesten recalls his first conversation with Kästner clearly.

"I said that one must aim to impress the elite of the century. Kästner said he wanted to please ordinary people, the more readers the better."

More than 35 years later, Erich Kästner, who had safely escaped, found in Munich that on his bookshelves "where the diaries of that time stood there was still room.

He decided to publish his own *Notabene 45*.

Arnim Juhre

(Deutsches Allgemeines Sonntagsblatt, Hamburg, 17 February 1989)

Continued from page 4

negative aspects of Community policies are emphasised. More and more the debate in the Federal Republic hammers away at the disadvantages and risks of opening up frontiers.

Election campaigners from all parties say regional differences are obvious.

In economically successful Baden-Württemberg, and also in Bavaria, people look to 1992, the date the single European market is to be introduced, more confidently and with greater self-assurance than in the economically weak northern region of the Federal Republic, a region which has to battle with considerable structural problems.

It is so easy for prejudices and anxieties to proliferate because people in the Federal Republic, as ever, are not very well informed about the European Community and Parliament.

According to an investigation of the "Eurobarometer," the survey regularly commissioned by Brussels, less than a half of the people in the Community know that there really is a European Parliament.

Then Euro-parliamentarians have another bitter pill to swallow: only a third who knew of the existence of the European Parliament had a very high opinion of it as a European institution.

In the Federal Republic 44 per cent had "in general a poor opinion" of the directly elected Parliament, in Britain and Holland it was more than a half.

Only just about 20 per cent of the people in the European Community have an unlimited good opinion of the Parliament in Strasbourg.

All parties are therefore agreed that their most important task is to encourage voters to vote, more important than party political disputes about individual themes.

Gerd Walter, the lead SPD candidate in the 18 June election, said: "We must make clear to the voters that policies are really made in Strasbourg in matters concerning environmental and consumer protection, and in many other areas, which directly affect European Community citizens."

The political parties still have four months to persuade voters to vote in the European Parliament elections.

Thomas Gack

(Stuttgarter Zeitung, 18 February 1989)

■ FILMS

Jewish collection reveals a present mirrored against the past

A series of 24 films about Jews and the problems of Jewry have been assembled by thehead of the Munich film museum, Enno Patalas, assisted by Rachel Salamander, who runs a Jewish bookshop in the city. The collection is wide-ranging in both type and content. There are documentaries and feature films and experimental films. Eva Elisabeth Fischer went to the museum to see for herself. She reports for the Munich daily, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*.

The loss of details constitute the gaps in history. Details are to be found in stories, which help to close the gaps.

Judaism is a religion of the word; for this reason stories are of particular value.

Judaism bans pictorial images to prevent idolatry. For this reason one is sceptical about films.

The latest film by the Belgian film-maker Chantal Akerman takes heed of this. *Histoires d'Amerique* narrates the stories of Jewish emigrants to the United States during the past 100 years.

The film is made up of personal miniatures, to be read like the letters column in the "Jewish Chronicle," London.

The Jews who speak directly into the camera are present-day American Jews. They are not identical with the I-narrator of the film.

The viewer has to put the past together himself, for the pictures on the screen document nothing.

Akerman avoids interiors. The film was shot in an open area under the Williamsburg Bridge, Brooklyn, where the second generation of Jewish emigrants have moved, rising up the social ladder into the middle class after having lived on the edge of starvation on the Lower East Side.

The suroundings hint at the surrealistic. They eat borscht and chicken broth at table. The Jewish humour is the vital black humour of survivors, a kind of epilogue, the songs are of nostalgia for the lost ones.

Chantal Akerman looks back and her people look back with her, full of sentiment, humour and sadness. The most bitter remark goes along the lines: "I am not Jewish and I'm doing very well."

This is a cynical insight: what pograms did not bring about, what mass extermination did not achieve is now under threat of assimilation without violence — the gradual disappearance of Jewry.

What do documents have to tell? What do pictures and figures show? They are just empty if the destiny of the individual does not amplify them, does not make them conceivable.

Chantal Akerman knows this, and for this reason she does not include documentary images — like Ken Jakob in *Urban Peasants: an Essay in Yiddish Structuralism*.

His experimental film is strict: there are neither words nor pictures. The screen is black at the beginning and the end, framing cuts from a recorded course in Yiddish and silent *Home Movies* from the 1930s and 1940s.

This is a film of oddments put together on the chance principle, fragments from Jewish family life in Brooklyn placed together with tough cutting techniques, sometimes over-lit, some passages repeated.

How do the people react on the camera? What is portrayed? A nation lives so long as its language lives. This is one of the aphorisms in *Cooperation of Parts* by Dan Eisenberg.

There is no Yiddish in the film, only American English, neither in the escalating sermons in sounds off nor as epigrams in the sub-titles.

The pictures dance, stumble, hop along, jolt along in rhythm to a travelling train, rock with the spectator's walk.

The documentary element is to be found in the associations: Munich, the Church of the Theatines, Dachau, Auschwitz today in long focus, countryside.

Like Akerman Eisenberg excludes documentary images. The truth lies behind the pictures, in inherited knowledge through suffering.

If you do not know something you must look for it. Our parents said little or nothing, because only by suppression was it possible to live on. Insinuations remain.

Debbie Goodstein from the US underlined this in *Voices from the Attic*.

An hour's drive away from Auschwitz there was a room measuring 15 square metres where 16 members of her family were hidden away for two whole years: thirteen of them survived.

A trip into the past with an aunt and five cousins broke the silence. The aunt said: "It's better if we walk on the grass." She did not want to walk over Jewish gravestones with which Polish paths were paved.

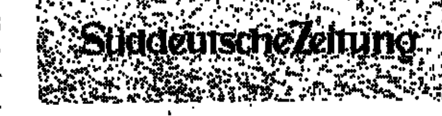
The countryside is green and idyllic, former neighbours remember the visitors and are delighted at seeing them again.

In apposition to views of the countryside and laughing faces there is the world, seen through gaps in wood. The camera pans through sheds, through the grim, barren land.

One has to think about the 16 people, a woman was sitting there and she sang a song of the past.

The narrative turns the harmless location into the place of horror. The past is obliterated, killed.

The dead remains of the Jewish Schtetl (village) — showed in documen-



tary dubbing in — paved pathways and roads in Poland. The horror remains.

The descendants want to know what was so as to be able to tell about it again.

That is the driving force of their films. They filmed the stories of their predecessors to be able to get closer to history.

Belgian, American and Dutch Jews collected pictures of landscapes, of concentration camp memorials, of houses, of people and tried to link them to the tales their relatives told, tales which the cinematic documentation confirmed.

These pictures showed shipping Jews off, concentration camps, liberation. Hitler's Jewish policies had consequences which have not been thought through.

The extermination of the Jews determined the thoughts of the following generations and now and again make up their identity as Jews.

Aviva Ziegler's generation, for instance. She grew up in Australia. Her father was an emigrant from Vienna. One of her cousins asks in the film: "What is a Jew to you?" Aviva Ziegler's film with this sentence as its title is about the question of her Judaism. Her relatives in New York, Vienna and Australia were made into Jews by Hitler. They were assimilated. Unlike Aviva Zeigler's brother, they had forgotten their traditions. But still they were Jews.



Menachem Mendel, the visionary who always loses, in *Jidische Glikn*.
(Photo: Film Museum Munich)

Film-maker Ziegler brings this down to a common denominator: one is like all the others, but some others as well — the past remains at the back of the mind.

She asks questions with sensitivity, explores places and events, and collects her relatives together in an event which actually excludes their own lack of religion: at a nephew's bar mitzvah.

Aviva Ziegler is a typical child of emigrant parents. Affluence and security make the emphasis on tradition superfluous, identity melts away.

The children of emigrant parents want to be better all the time, better Australians, better Americans.

The men shave off their beards, the women put their wigs away. There are places reserved for Jewry: the so-called Borscht Belt, a place in the Catskill Mountains, 100 miles from Manhattan, named after the poor man's beetroot soup.

Entertainment flourished in this holiday resort for Jewish workers and the middle classes.

Tony Curtis, Eddie Fisher, Shelley Winters and Jerry Lewis put on their pre-Broadway shows there.

The Borscht Belt, its hotels, the whole resort, has become dilapidated. Today's Jews can afford other trips and pleasures than their forefathers could.

Peter Davis traces this in *The Rise and Fall of the Borscht Belt*. This is a curiosity about an aspect of wordly Jewish culture and its decline.

Time works like a grinding stone. Two thousand years of the disapora has brought about a variety of travels, exiles and loses. Whoever fled the Holy Land after the destruction of the Second Temple has not yet arrived at his destination. So many Jews. So many peoples.

The Moroccan Jews, descendants of the Berber Jews, the Spanish Jews who fled from the Inquisition in 1492 and the Yemeni Jews all lost their home and their identity once more. Most of them, who were no longer tolerated in the countries of their origin, travelled from 1949 onwards to Israel.

They could scarcely hold on to their traditions and rituals. And their handicrafts, developed over the generations, died out.

Judaism is not the same all over the world. Even the public holidays differ. The life and language of neighbours — in this case the Arabs — coloured traditions.

Eugene Rosow's *Routes of Exile: a Moroccan Jewish Odyssey* and Anthony Posner's *About the Jews in Yemen* deal with people repeatedly uprooted, of the loss of a rich cultural heritage. These films emphasise what was centuries ago and what is no longer there. Even in the Jewish state, Israel, a part of Judaism is lost: the ethnic part, established over generations.

Whether these were documentary or feature films they depict loss everywhere. For this reason some of these films seem like an obituary list. So much is only preserved on film.

What existed before Hitler is also cinematographically valuable, for at that time there were no working bans on Jews.

In the course of liberalisation in the Soviet Union some early Jewish feature films made in Russia will probably appear. The *Jidische Glikn* was a bitter-cynical foretaste of things to come.

Menachem Mendel, the visionary, who always loses and brings happiness to others in this way, is a figure from the 19th century.

Literature and theatre turn up again in this film. One laughs at each of Menachem's mishaps, but there is criticism there.

Brides are sold off. Money is more important to the big wigs than the happiness of their children.

Alexey Granowski was the founder of Moscow's Jewish Theatre. He was assisted in finding the language of the film by Eisenstein's cameraman, Eduard Tissé.

The Dutch film *Weergevonden* by Louis Crispijn and Edmond Edren, dating from 1914, mixed melodrama and schmaltz together. The theme of the film was more important to Jews then than it is now. The threat to Judaism of mixed marriages.

A daughter, disowned because of her marriage to a non-Jew, is once more accepted by her impoverished father.

Amsterdam's Grachten are desolate. The houses throw long shadows on the blind peddlers. The frames touch the heart.

Schuhpalast Pinkus comes to life more from its comic situations, its witty title links and the matchless comedy of its main actor than from its visual effects.

Ernst Lubitsch plays the audacious Sally Pinkus, a good-for-nothing who overwhelms everyone and everything and so gets on in the world.

This film is thoroughly Jewish, the Jewish jokes are conveyed by the action, condensed in Sally himself.

This was made in 1916. Before that Lubitsch had played in impromtu Yiddish theatre. He no longer spoke Mameloschn, the mother tongue. It survives among a very few who survived the concentration camps, and was still spoken in the displaced persons camps.

There is only one film about the displaced persons camps, camps that provided accommodation to Jews who had lost their homes through the war.

This film is the melodrama *Lang ist der*

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■ MYSTERY OF MIGRATORY BIRDS

South west for eight weeks and then straight ahead for another eight

We all know that many birds migrate south in autumn, and no prizes are awarded for guessing why. How they find their way there and back in spring is another matter, one that has preoccupied scientists for decades.



Despite many a success to which they can lay claim they can still not explain for sure how migratory birds manage to fly back from Africa year after year and find the very same nest in which to breed.

It is not an easy problem to solve. Birds have been found to go by at least seven different navigation systems and techniques to set a course and stay on it.

The Sun and stars are self-evident navigation guides. Birds may also be able to recognise certain areas they overfly by means of smells and infrasonic waves.

Latest ornithological findings mainly indicate that a variety of factors are involved. Scientists refer to a "multifactoral" system the ramifications of which they are only just beginning to understand.

Frankfurt University research scientists Wolfgang and Roswitha Wiltschko, specialists in bird migration, recently outlined the latest findings.

New navigation aids have regularly been discovered since Gustav Kramer showed starlings to be guided by a solar compass 40 years ago.

Fly-by-nights like the warbler were soon shown, by means of planetarium experiments, to be guided north by the Pole star and its celestial neighbours.

Merkel and Wiltschko proved in *1965 that robins and whitethroats used* a magnetic compass.

Migratory birds do not go by magnetic north, however; they are guided by the angle of magnetic field lines. Yet no-one knows how they identify them.

Many species have since been found to orient themselves by the Earth's magnetic field.

This initially triggered heated controversy, the Wiltschkos said, because the stars and a magnetic compass were felt to be mutually exclusive alternatives.

Birds are now known to use the magnetic field not only as a kind of foul-weather navigation system; they also use it to check and realign their individual orientation system.

They evidently transfer magnetic field data to their individual solar or stellar compass and then fly by the stars, which may well be easier to read.

"Experiments have shown on balance," they said, "that the magnetic field is the factor by which birds are guided during migration and which they use to check their stellar compass."

Once they are on course they can use simpler techniques to stay on it. Scientists so far know very little about these secondary navigation systems, such as "sunset factors" for night-flying birds, infrasonic waves and landmarks.

The findings are contradictory and strongly indicate that differences exist between species. Migratory birds are definitely guided by a combination of factors; that alone can be said for sure.

The Wiltschkos feel their mysterious ability to go by the Earth's magnetic field may be the main factor, but directional guides (which way to fly) also take the form of a genetic code.

In other words, birds go by both the magnetic field and by celestial rotation as a system of reference.

This is arguably surprising inasmuch as each factor, taken individually, would seem to be sufficient for satisfactory orientation — and is so for a number of species.

Migratory birds possess what technicians call a redundant system, a secondary facility on which to fall back in the event of a breakdown.

This belt-and-braces arrangement has only recently been favoured as a standard procedure for complicated technical equipment.

A further inexplicable factor is the absolutely accurate biological clock by which birds register the time of day.

Numerous experiments have been carried out to upset this "built-in" timepiece by, for instance, artificially switching night and day, confusing the birds accordingly.

But scientists to this day have no idea where the biological clock is located and how it works. All they know for sure is that it runs for longer than 24 hours.

Birds also have a seasonal clock by which they judge when the time has come to migrate, and this "inner calendar" is probably accompanied by an exact sense of target navigation.

Migratory birds must have both an inherent sense of direction and some idea of the distance to be covered. Some kind of programme then deals with the details.

An important part in the time birds spend on the wing is played by their migratory unrest. Dr Eberhard Gwinner and research staff at Radolfzell bird observatory have shown the duration of this restive period to correspond exactly to the time it takes them to complete their autumn migration.

This point was proved using caged birds — young birds brought up by hand — of a species of small songbird that spends the winter in Africa.

Records of their restive behaviour not only showed them to be at their most restive in August and September when free-flying members of their species are crossing the Mediterranean and the Sahara. Their unrest also reflects the direction the flock takes.

Wolfgang Wiltschko and Eberhard Gwinner have carried out experiments on young whitethroats with no experience of migration.

They were found to be most restive in the south-west corner of their cages in August, when the flock *is* heading south-west across Central Europe.

Then, in early October, they veer south-east over Gibraltar and cross the Sahara, heading for Central Africa.

Oddly enough, the caged whitethroats moved to the south-east corner of their cages at the same time, veering in exactly the same direction as whitethroats on the wing.

"The time schedule that relates to the distance covered during the migration period can evidently also control the direction," the Wiltschkos say.

"The information *genetically* programmed in the warbler's instincts must this consist of the instructions: 'Fly south-west for about eight weeks, then south-south-east for a further eight weeks or so.!'"

In spring the caged birds only showed signs of being restive in the northern corner of their cages. On their way back to their breeding areas the whitethroats are clearly in a hurry.

They fly due north across the Sahara and the Mediterranean, as even young birds that have yet to migrate seem to know. This genetic programme enables them to reach Africa even though they have never flown south before.

This programme is of enormous importance for an estimated five billion birds that migrate from continent to continent every year.

It is the only way in which they can be sure of finding food, sustenance and suitable living conditions in winter.

Professor Peter Berthold of Radolfzell has demonstrated the existence of this genetic component with his classic studies of another breed of warbler.

It is the blackcap, a particularly interesting breed in that European populations vary in their migration patterns; some don't migrate at all, staying in the Cape Verdes.

When blackcaps from Finland, with a longer distance to travel, are cross-bred with blackcaps from south-western France their young demonstrate what scientists call intermediate behaviour.

In other words, their flight time is genetically programmed. So migratory birds are not merely sent on their way by more powerful rivals and forced to leave for this reason.

Matthias Glaubrecht

(Die Welt, Bonn, 18 February 1989)

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Landesbank, so saving secretarial and communications costs.

The second building has been leased out to Bremen and Hesse.

The United States has for a long time realised the advantage of regional representation. Lobbyists from California, Maryland and Michigan have been involved in information gathering for some years.

A cute suggestion came recently from Texas to put an end to the trade war about hormone-treated beef from America. Contrary to widely held views the Texans can supply hormone-free beef to Europe.

"It is astonishing how nimble the old lady Federalism can be," Herr Neukirchen says. The latest development is that the Bundesrat has established a European Community chamber. This committee can sit within the four-week rotation system and so discuss legal proposals and decisions more swiftly.

The chairman of the "mini-Bundesrat" is always the authorised representative of the state from which the president of the Bundesrat comes.

At present Marianne Tudick, minister from Schleswig-Holstein, is chairing the small Bundesrat club.

Almut Hauenschild

(Hannoversche Allgemeine, 17 February 1989)

■ MEDICINE

Environmental toxins are blamed for increase in human infertility

More and more young couples in the Federal Republic of Germany who would like to have children are remaining childless.

Very few are medically incapable of having children; environmental toxins are having an increasingly massive effect on fertility.

Having children is a dream more and more parents are unable to fulfil:

In the 1950s between seven and eight per cent of newly-weds did not have children. In the industrialised world today childless marriages make up between 15 and 20 per cent of the total.

Yet organic causes of infertility only apply in between three to five per cent of cases, says Professor Henning Beier, head of the department of anatomy and reproductive biology at Aachen University of Technology.

"Scientists all over the world," he writes in the February 1989 issue of *Chancen*, an environmental magazine, "are working on the assumption that environmental strains and toxins are increasingly to blame for procreation impediments and damage to the foetus in its earliest stages."

More and more environmental toxins equals fewer and fewer young is an equation that is well known in the animal world.

In the United States DDT made the white-tailed or grey sea eagle almost extinct.

The insecticide was enriched via the food chain in the she-eagle's ovary, with the result that the eggs soon no longer had hard shells, only soft and easily-damaged skins.

Dutch seal colonies that live on a diet of fish from the Rhine estuary are hard hit by PCB, or polychlorinated biphenyl, which has triggered a dramatic decline in the otter population in Sweden too.

The daily intake of toxins that pollute soil, water and air does not just affect otters and seals. It make men sterile and women have miscarriages.

Male infertility is often due to heavy metals such as mercury, cadmium and lead, and more often still to chlorinated hydrocarbons that are an ingredient of many pesticides and weedkillers.

"Findings in the United States and various industrialised countries in Western Europe have revealed a decline in the number of spermatozoa among fertile men over the past 50 years," says Professor Wolfgang Schill.

"The environmental toxin count is probably to blame," he adds. Professor Schill is an andrologist at Munich University's dermatology clinic.

Surveys have shown the sperm count of many men to be up to 40 per cent down on a mere 20 years ago.

Research scientists are finding it extremely difficult to trace the way in which environmental toxins affect the body.

Dr Hans van der Ven, head surgeon at Bonn University maternity clinic, has outlined in a recent publication how chlorinated hydrocarbons can make men sterile.

Spermatozoa have a number of important tasks to fulfil in the process of conception. They must swim strongly and straight ahead, find the ovum and dock alongside it before merging with it and unloading their genetic cargo.



So they must be sufficiently mobile and have an intact membrane and a functioning acrosome (the enzyme-filled tip that enables sperm to penetrate the ovum).

In vitality tests these so-called sperm parameters were tested in test tubes.

Chlorinated hydrocarbons were shown to affect each of these parameters, each substance proving most devastating at a different point in the process.

"Polychlorinated biphenyl seems to be the most intensive," says Dr van der Ven. "The damage it causes increases with the dose."

DDE, a member of the DDT family, triggers the "acrosomal reaction," for instance, releasing the enzymes before an ovum is anywhere near to penetrate.

So much for that sperm; it will no longer do the trick.

Hexachlorbenzole, in contrast, damages the sperm membrane, making it less able to dock alongside the ovum, while PCB drastically reduces sperm mobility.

A particularly devastating factor is that the toxins start to work in concentrations that have been shown to exist in many people's bodies (between one and *ten nanograms per millilitre of body* fluid).

These are concentrations that can lead to sperm damage in men. Healthy spermatozoa can also be made infertile by corresponding toxin counts in the female genital tract.

Fat-soluble substances such as DDT and PCB are enriched in women's follicle fluid and might, in theory, stand substitute for the contraceptive pill.

A daily cup of coffee or tea containing a suitable quantity of pesticide or weedkiller residue might well also serve as a contraceptive if the worst came to the worst.

An estimated 2.3 million tonnes a year of these substances is sprayed on crops all over the world.

Rhodanide, a tobacco derivate, has also been identified in a high concentration in follicle fluid. Thus smoking may also be cause of infertility.

American scientists have also identified traces of nicotine in the mucous membrane of the uterus. They say it occurs in a concentration 10 to 20 times higher than in the blood.

So women may reach a toxin level harmful for procreation much faster than analysis of blood samples might suggest.

"We now know," says Professor Heinz Bohnet of the Hamburg University department of hormone and procreational disturbances, "that environmental toxins find their way into the ovaries and the germ cells."

A survey by the Family Planning Association in Oxford, England, of about 17,000 women who took the Pill has shown the extent of unwanted infertility due to smoking.

About 4,100 of them stopped taking the Pill with a view to having children. About five per cent of non-smokers remained childless.

Over 10 per cent of women who smoked more than 15 cigarettes a day remained childless.

Non-smokers were pregnant after about six months, whereas smokers took a year.

Aachen research scientists led by Professor Beier have also shown nicotine to be embryotoxic.

Even if fertilisation takes place, the foetus is far from in the clear. Environmental toxins can even attack the embryo when it consists of no more than a few cells.

"Even in undisturbed Nature," Professor Beier says, "up to 60 per cent of embryos die before they are implanted *in the uterus. Toxins increase this percentage* and the survival capability of those that remain is impaired."

Professor Spielmann of the Federal Health Department, Berlin, has identified another source of damage.

Many substances are virtually harmless on their own but toxic in combination with others. The embryotoxic effect of cytostatic (anti-cancer) drugs, for instance, is drastically increased by caffeine.

These "cell-killers" have for some time been suspected of being to blame for upsets in procreation. Nurses who inhale even minute amounts have been known to have miscarriages.

People in other jobs are also liable, to an above-average degree, to the "new infertility" — due mainly to stress and mental upset in addition to environmental toxins.

Operating theatre nurses and anaesthetists are a case in point. They inhale traces of anaesthetics such as halothane or tribromethanol in the operating theatre. Women members of operating theatre teams have a striking number of miscarriages.

This suspicion has been confirmed in animal experiments. Rats and mice drugged only once three or four weeks prior to conception were found to have 27 per cent miscarriages, as against an average 14.7 per cent among rodents.

People who work in seemingly healthy trades, such as farmers, wine-growers, foresters, gardeners, citrus fruit pickers and florists, also often seem threatened with infertility as a result of everyday contact with pesticides and weedkillers.

Both men and women are affected, and other risk groups (only a few) include workers in chemical factories, lead and copper foundries, spray-painting workshops, leather, rubber and textiles factories and refineries.

Even laundry workers can be affected. Danish doctors who compared painters and construction workers found a significantly higher proportion of 30- to 40-year-old painters to be infertile.

Where you work can affect fertility; so can where you live. In Malmö, Sweden, men who lived in a district with heavy industry were found to have a markedly lower sperm count than men in the city's rural environs.

They didn't just have far fewer than what can ordinarily be up to 120 million spermatozoa per millilitre of ejaculate; the sperm of men affected by heavy industry near where they lived tended to be more deformed.

Sterility, miscarriages and deformities can all be traced back to environmental toxins, with infertility often forestalling deformities in the first place, as it were.

This factor can easily lead to a misinterpretation of the risk run by working in a particular job or in a specific environmental situation, as Norwegian statistics show.

Women employed in the leather and textiles industries were found to have distinctly fewer handicapped children than others, but that wasn't to say that they run fewer risks than women working in other industries.

Closer scrutiny revealed that they had up to 50 per cent more miscarriages than the others, with the result that damaged embryos did not survive to be deformed.

Mankind may not become extinct as a result of these toxins, Professor Beier says. Human procreation is far too robust for that to be likely, which is more than be said for many species.

But environmental toxins are already contributing substantially toward population decline in the industrialised countries.

With reference to the societal consequences of this trend a Hamburg doctor, Wilfried Karmaus, says:

"Since these countries have advanced medical technology they will increasingly establish treatment centres for procreational medicine, which at first glance would seem simpler to treat than reducing work and environmental burdens.

"But many people have yet to appreciate how expensive this trend will be for the health service."

Dr Karmaus also has plain words to say about a further aspect. About 40 per cent of pregnancies in the Federal Republic of Germany at present end with an abortion.

So 83,500 live births a year must be seen in comparison with 205,000 abortions or miscarriages. Between 20 and 30 per cent of the latter are, he says, due to environmental toxins and dangerous substances at work.

Michael Odenwald

(Frankfurter Rundschau, 18 February 1989)

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Weg, made by Herbert Fredersdorf and Marek Goldstein in 1947. It was not shown in Bavarian cinemas then.

It was the first feature film to be shot in Germany using original documentary material.

Along with the actors people who lived in various southern German displaced persons camps appeared in it.

The film tells about what happened to many. David survived in the forest with the partisans. His father was murdered in Auschwitz. Post-war Warsaw. Everything is rubble, in ruins. Rescue in the displaced persons camp. Overcrowding and the search for relatives.

This is conventional narrative cinema, whose authenticity gives it worth, and its cinematic documentation which was too little known at the time.

Jewish films mean films reflecting the Jewish condition through Jewish reminiscence.

The process is often painful — for the film-makers as well as for the spectators.

But at the same time it is rewarding. This exercise in memory opens up a view into a life of variety.

Some film-fans might be stimulated to look at Hollywood films afresh — as an artform from Jews, a form which began to think in terms of the visual.

Eva Elisabeth Fischer

(Süddeutsche Zeitung, Munich, 1 March 1989)

■ YOUTH

It's not only gymnastics up on the parallel bars

The radio tootled away. Gymnast Stefanie Tautz chattered about her tonsil operation. She smiled and crawled about the gymnasium floor.

Nine coloured clips and a rubber band kept her hair in place — for when she defied gravity. Then in a flash the chatterbox became a hard-working girl.

She jumped up the asymmetric bars, twisted round a parallel bar, the mere sight of which made the spectator wince, and went up to dizzy heights in a hand spring. She slammed back to the ground — and smiled.

Stefanie Tautz seemed relaxed in the summer of 1986 — because a heavy burden had fallen from her narrow shoulders.

A short time before-hand Stefanie, 16, had been expelled from the German Gymnastics Association's training school in Frankfurt.

National trainer Vladimir Prorok and gymnastics training assistant Ursula Hinz had told Stefanie that they did not want her at the school any longer.

Their reason was that Stefanie, who had been sick, had let her trainer from her home gymnasium, Hans-Joachim Dörrer, pay her a visit in the school's gymnasium, after she had been to the doctor in Detmold.

She was just a pawn in a game played by sports officials, and as such she was a case of interest for Hamburg educationalist Professor Karlheinz Scherler.

His thesis is that within the sports system sportsmen and women are told what to do by others.

Professor Scherler's report was made before a sports forum organised by the parliamentary party of the Greens in December last year on competitive sport for children.

At the same forum Professor Walter Bärsch, chairman of the children's protection association, criticised more sharply sports activities.

He said: "The demands made of young athletes have become brutal, because the concept of childhood is no longer taken seriously. Children are turned into objects of misanthropic interests."

This is very true. Stefanie Tautz regarded her expulsion from the training school more as a salvation than a punishment, even through at first it seemed she was to go no further up the ladder of success.

She said: "At the Frankfurt school there was only three things, doing gymnastics, doing gymnastics, doing gymnastics."

Unlike many of her fellow young gymnasts, who in recent times have not developed physically and mentally, Stefanie Tautz did not end her career.

She went back to her trainer in her hometown, Detmold, Hans-Joachim Dörrer. He had had to leave Frankfurt for what was said to be professional incompetence. He held quite different views about training for competitive sport than national trainer Prorok.

At Detmold he applied the idea of building up performance in line with age.

Dörrer regards a child's age as only a transit point towards first-class performance, and as a consequence he is against specialisation too early to protect children against non-reversible strains on the tendons, bones and cartilage.

Describing his methods he said: "I place emphasis on a precise and finicky basic training. This should be completed by the age of 12. But at this age no extremely difficult gymnastics should be done," Dörrer said.

He pointed out that the physical dangers for young female gymnasts were sufficiently well known.

Hans-Joachim Dörrer was rehabilitated four months after his sensational departure from Frankfurt in 1986.

Stefanie Tautz became the German gymnastics champion in 1988. At the West German championships at Singen she won four out of the five titles.

She is now 19 and the once-scorned girl is now the German Gymnastics Association's great hope for the world championships in Stuttgart in October.

Her late successes were all the more surprising since Stefanie had actually ended her career in 1987 after a severe foot injury.

Then she overcame her pride. Explaining what drove her on to her comeback after so many disappointments she said: "I wanted to show those people at the Frankfurt school something."

She also has high hopes for a grant for her intended studies in the United States through her good performances on the parallel bars, over the hurdles, on the vaulting-horse and on the floor.

"Even if people don't understand this, I enjoy gymnastics," she said.

Possibly this comment is the greatest achievement of the careful training she has undergone to build up her performance. Hans-Joachim Dörrer said: "If a gymnast is contented with her surroundings then the present-day workload is no problem."

Stefanie's trainer has himself taken on the most important responsibilities involving the interaction between her home life, school and sport, for example.

He is also her teacher in her sport subject for her Abitur, university entrance examination, at the Christian-Dietrich Grabbe Gymnasium in Detmold.

He said: "She gets no special treatment." But school activities are geared as far as possible to her training requirements.

When she is at a training camp or travelling to competitions one of her fellow students sends her notes on lessons. With the agreement of her classmates exams are deferred. Extra coaching helps her catch up with lessons she has missed when she gets back.

Success can be achieved by keeping sports training centres at a distance. Explaining the key to her performance Dörrer said: "Steffi needs her normal surroundings, her friends and her family life."

She also does all she can to avoid the tendency of competitive sport occupying gymnasts' lives totally.

After return from joging, she had to slim down to her competition weight of 49 kilograms.

Dr Bodo-Knut Jüngst of Mainz said that diet was a particular danger for young girls.

Explaining this point he said: "The diets for quite a few girls in sport no longer make sense entirely. The diet can be an abuse of the child with all its consequences for hormone development, for her when she begins to menstruate and the psychological problems that can follow on from that."

Heinz Döring, former sports pastor of the Protestant Church of Germany, has had experience of the emotional consequences of perilous ambition.

He said: "At the Olympic Games I have seen young sportsmen and women make themselves sick to keep their weight and how they have had to take substitute preparations. The young people were affected deep within themselves. "So, out of a reverence for it competitive sport for children should be rejected."

Examples such as Stefanie Tautz who has gone through many years gymnastics relatively unharmed, are rare.

The decision to go in for acrobatic gymnastics has to be taken at a very early age.

Federal gymnastics trainer Reinhard Hornig lamented the lack of fundamental training when gymnasts were young after the depressing national defeat against the Russians in December.

Dörrer also concedes that if one wants to compete internationally, an early start has to be made, as Stefanie Tautz did, who began to train seriously at the age of eight.

Suspicious of the sporting world's ability to impose self-controls, Walter Bärsch demanded a separation of popular sport from "sport that has drifted into entertainment and competitive sport that has drifted into a kind of circus act."

Only by such a distinction can the supervisory elements of youth and labour legislation be applied.

After consideration of the various options the Greens intend to present the recommendations made by the children's protection association to the Bundestag.

But who wants to have the public prosecutor in the gymnasium? It seems more important that "objective uneasiness," as Bärsch put it, should increase about children doing gymnastics, so that parents, officials and trainers overcome the temptations of glory and honour.

Stefanie Tautz has now got through the dangerous beginner period.

Describing the qualities of a sportswoman Dörrer said: "A good woman gymnast must be independently minded. Stefanie Tautz knew what she wanted. She has gained a lot mentally."

Udo Ludwig

(Deutsches Allgemeines Sonntagsblatt, 3 February 1989)

The Boy Scouts seek new knots to tie

An official of the association of boy scouts has called for a camp site identity card for young people, similar to a bank card.

He said that if young people had such a card they would be "fighting to get into our camps."

He was putting his finger on a point that has been worrying youth associations, youth centres and hostels for a long time: traditional camp sites and hiking trips leave young people today quite cold. They have more attractive things to do — organised by the commercial sector.

Savings banks advertise their youth clubs in trendy colourful magazines, offering members riding holidays, city visits or reduced-price tickets for concerts.

Department stores organise computer clubs. Travel agents have specialised in arranging adventure trips, sport and language course holidays.

Gyms, amusement arcades and pinball halls have cut the ground from under the feet of youth associations. Even music schools and team study-groups are competing with youth associations.

These associations are now making greater efforts to attract young people because the market is diminishing. During the 1960s more than one million children were born per year: last year it was no more than 600,000.

The first to notice this were toy manufacturers and producers of baby-ware, then schools, banks and youth associations.

Werner Sauerhöfer is from the Federal Youth Ring, the umbrella organisation for youth associations. He said that membership numbers were dropping primarily among political groups.

Social services such as the Junior Red Cross and junior fire brigade were very popular among young people — perhaps because of the uniform.

The Emnid Institute, Bielefeld, made a survey in 1987 which showed that 44 per cent of young people belonged to one organisation or another: according to Hans Hillmeier of the Bavarian Youth Ring this was ten per cent lower than a similar study in 1984.

Nevertheless, according to the Federal Youth Ring the degree to which youth is organised has not changed over the past few years. Between 25 and 30 per cent of young people have always belonged to an organisation.

While some organisations fear for their public grants if membership falls, others are worried about their business.

According to a study conducted by the youth research institute in Munich young people between 13 and 20 have a total annual purchasing power of almost DM30bn. A spokesman for the Göppingen savings bank said that at 14 young people were already set in their consumer patterns. Young people had to be convinced of the qualities of products.

Companies frankly admit this. A bank employee said: "Our activities are carried on against a commerical background. We can hardly get involved in solving young people's problems. There are the traditional youth work facilities for that."

Youth organisations see the danger for them at this point. Johannes Heinrich, head of the Baden-Württemberg Youth Ring, said: "The 'commercial world' picks out the plums in the youth side of dealing with young people, forcing us to deal with the problems."

Independent youth organisations see themselves under pressure from the state, and not just due to continuous financial worries, as Sauerhöfer put it.

According to the Federal Youth Ring the proposed new rules for youth legislation will trim their influence in youth work in favour of the public sector.

Although young people's lives are increasingly getting snarled up, and youth workers have to straighten things out, education officials ignore the broad aims of education.

Hillmeier sees in this a welfare strategy in which the state's involvement in youth work is increasingly direct.

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■ FRONTIERS

Living at the edges of society: life remains tough for the modern gypsy

When Linda Schopper was 16 and living at home in Würzburg she wanted to become a hairdresser, but she did not achieve her ambition.

Hairdressers who were approached to take her on as a trainee declined to do so for an incredible reason: one of them was prepared to say out loud what the others had had one their minds.

He said: "I can't expect my clients to accept a gypsy washing their hair."

Gallier Herzberg's father is a travelling coppersmith. He and others have tried to explain why they had not been able to get a school-leaving certificate.

Gallier said: "No matter where I was or which class I was in I was always the lowest in the class. And no-one would have anything to do with me."

These are routine experiences of people who are outsiders in society. Centuries after gypsies broke away from the Indian motherland their descendants are still not regarded very highly, and they have endlessly met with hostility.

Harald Hiller, a gypsy from Frankfurt, said more in resignation than in anger:

"It's like in the Middle Ages. If we want a hall to hold a celebration we have to pay a high deposit. And on top of that we have to seek police protection. But we don't make any trouble."

At the Standing Conference of German Town Councils in Cologne Adam Strauss, a gypsy from Darmstadt, appealed passionately for "permanent sites where we are not driven off after two or three days."

His precisely typed letter ended asking that his request "be evaluated with a feeling for other human beings."

This is an expression of anger and grief, and an attempt to adjust by a crushed minority.

Hiller, Strauss, the young girl from Würzburg and hundreds of other gypsies are now for the first time having their say in public in a congress entitled "Non-Naturalised gypsies in the Federal Republic."

This congress has been organised by the social workers department of Cologne Polytechnic.

The congress lasted four days and gypsy representatives spoke about the daily battles of their lives, their social impoverishment and the threatening decline of their culture.

Rudko Kawczynski, a spokesman for the gypsy Union in Hamburg and a Green Party candidate for the European Parliament elections, said:

"Gypsies were always being driven away. They always had to disappear. They are beginning to organise themselves."

The history of flight, persecution and murder of these Indian itinerants, gypsies, is long. Gypsies emigrated into the Holy Roman Empire 600 years ago.

The Roma or Romanys settled firstly in east and south-east Europe and only came to Germany in the middle of the 15th century.

Gypsies from both groups, the Roma and the Sinti, were victims of the Nazis in the same way as the Jews.

In the Nazi period people who lived on the fenced and guarded sites for vagrants in Cologne were shipped off to Sachsenhausen, Litzmannstadt, Treblinka and Auschwitz.

They were sent to concentration camp in accordance with a 1937 decree and then in the following year as a result of Himmler's decree on a final solution to the gypsy question.

The Nazis murdered more than 500,000 gypsies in occupied Europe. Many of them in the Balkans, particularly in today's Yugoslavia.

There are also records of Yugoslav Romanies being shipped to German labour camps and factories. People in Cologne, concerned with gypsies and their fate, who have travelled in Yugoslavia, maintain that there are gypsies and their families still living in Nis in southern Serbia for example, who were sent to forced labour in Germany. They are living in distressing, ghetto-like conditions.

Many gypsies, who were persecuted by the Nazis and who were never compensated for their sufferings, returned to Western Europe in the 1960s. Hundreds of large families, decades after the war, are coming as refugees.

They still live without any political rights and in economic hardship. This is happening at a time when there is a revival of xenophobia and frustration in federal states and local communities, whose welfare budgets are extended to the full.

Some of the *Sinti* families, who have lived in certain cities for generations, feel restrained anger.

Professor Mehl, head of the social affairs and youth office in Freiburg, intends to provide accommodation for a group of 112 gypsies.

This has met with some opposition from local opinion. Citizens have said they would prefer their own punks and rockers to gypsies.

In Professor Mehl's project the rivalries among the various itinerant groups can be brought under control.

He said that the *Sinti* gypsies included in his project feared that the Roma would harm the image of gypsies as a whole, particularly by their public begging in a pushing manner.

He said: "The Sinti help us to get the Roma to join in." But their is no question of the Roma being integrated.

The professor added that consideration should be given to the fact that "integration was not always necessary. Perhaps migration would be the right answer."

"Migration," going off on their travels, is denied to the Roma of today. There are hardly any permanent camping sites they could use, sites with sanitation facilities not at all. The Council of Europe recommended in 1969 that its member-states should make such sites available.

The Frankfurt social affairs department points out that only such facilities would attract people to go on their travels again.

"Vagrants" are not admitted to normal camping sites, and travelling gypsies can no longer live from their traditional activities as peddlers, traders in small items and as tinkers.

Kurt Holl of the Cologne gypsy Initiative, believes that five per cent at the most would be prepared to go on their travels again.

He said: "I only know families who want to live in the normal way, who want to send their children to school. That is the only chance they have of ensuring their survival."

It has been estimated that in the 1960s there were as many as 8,000 itinerant gypsies in Europe. In 1977 Holland absorbed 450. For a while Italy and France tolerated them, but then clamped down on them again.

The result is that thousands of stateless gypsies are looking for somewhere to stay, stranded on the fringes of German communities, vegetating between railyards and rubbish dumps, without means of support, illegally in the country, sick and cold, in Hamburg, Mannheim, Dortmund and Wuppertal.

Gypsy aid groups are of the view that the fate of many of these people is a dark chapter in Germany's efforts at coping with the past. This is a judgment which German officialdom hardly shares.

An official of Hamburg's internal affairs department said that gypsies are treated in the same way as others seeking aylum. There are 600 gypsies waiting for a decision on their fate in Hamburg.

The Hamburg spokesman said that a 14-member family from Yugoslavia "are in line for deportation." He pointed out that information had been obtained from the Foreign Office in Bonn and Amnesty International to the effect that there was no political persecution in Yugoslavia.

Gypsy Initiatives, established in many major cities in the Federal Republic, are no longer prepared to settle for such legal quibbling.

They counter this argument with Article 16 of Basic Law, internationally a unique regulation, and the guarantees of human rights in Article 1, the right to remain in the country for humanitarian reasons.

Thomas Bischof of the Cologne gypsies Association said that the aim of the four-day congress was "to find a way for these people to lead their lives in the long-term."

It is no accident that the congress took place in Cologne. The city is regarded as a "pacemaker for the idea of integration."

Gerd Becker of the Frankfurt group concerned about gypsies said: "At least there is debate there. All other communities try to dodge the issue."

Cologne city council will integrate 100 gypsies. Nine "supporters," acceptable to the city, have guaranteed to accept personal financial liability as "godparents" and "partners" for gypsy families who have expressed their wilingness to be integrated into society.

These groups are mainly associated with the Protestant City Superintendent, Pastor Manfred Kock.

That is not many compared with the 700 who are waiting for official permission to stay in the country. However when compared with the strict defensive stance adopted by other local communities the Cologne Partnership Pilot Programme is an attempt to break the cycle of "illegality, expulsion, distress and crime."

Details of the project have been circulated by the German Cities Conference as a reference paper.

But the debate among the political parties in Cologne's City Council has aroused doubts that the "mild line" might not be continued.

Many voluntary helpers who are concerned about gypsy affairs, including members of the gypsy Partnership Group, have demanded that "high-sounding resolutions, declarations of intent and moral attitudes should in this case be handled by the Council of Europe for the protection of the Sinti and Roma minority."

They should be acted upon in private homes instead of by the federal states and local administrations.

Students, professors, pastors, social workers and particularly housewives have telephoned hospitals and local government offices, accompanied gypsies to the aliens department and to the social affairs office.

They have made trips to embassies, obtained the services of interpreters and driving school teachers to teach gypsies who are illiterate.

They all arbitrate conflicts between various groups, and every evening type letter after letter which begins: "Dear Mr Town Clerk..."

Annelie Stankau

(Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger, Cologne, 18 February 1989)

The 10 million

Ten million gypsies are living scattered throughout the world, with different traditions, different dialects and different ways of behaviour. Gypsies are divided into two tribes, Roma and Sinti. Originally they came from the Punjab in northern India. The Sinti arrived in Germany 600 years ago. Their language, Romani, is very similar to Sanskrit, but it includes elements from all the countries through which the gypsies have travelled. The itinerant groups were at first received in a friendly manner. Many German princes offered them protection and safe conduct. The situation changed when economic conditions changed. Between 1497 and 1744 no less than 146 edicts were issued against gypsies. They were outlawed by the Reichstag of 1497. At the beginning of the 18th century the first gypsy laws were enacted and at the end of the last century officialdom began registering details about them. The Nazis systematically sought to annihilate them. After 1945 relatives and survivors were given no compensation of any kind, morally or financially.

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social problem groups. Fewer and fewer funds are being made available for pure "recreation" or young people's social lives.

Hillmeier said that youth associations had long since said goodbye to their monopoly position in providing young people with leisure activities. Young people do not want to have anything to do with "clubishness." Doing things in groups is out — project work is in.

Youth associations advertise their work and seek to recruit new members using eye-catching magazines and videos, professionally made. But the associations do not intend competing with the commerical world in all things.

According to Hillmeier a travel agency tempted 15-year-olds with sekt (sparkling white wine) breakfasts.

He said that is diametrically opposed to what youth organisations were all about.

Thea Emmerling

(General-Anzeiger, Bonn, 4 February 1989)